Cashel Byron's Profession

by G. Bernard Shaw

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G. BERNARD SHAW

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PROLOGUE

I

Moncrief House, Panley Common. Scholastic establishment for the sons of gentlemen, etc.

Panley Common, viewed from the back windows of Moncrief House, is a tract of grass, furze and rushes, stretching away to the western horizon.

One wet spring afternoon the sky was full of broken clouds, and the common was swept by their shadows, between which patches of green and yellow gorse were bright in the broken sunlight. The hills to the northward were obscured by a heavy shower, traces of which were drying off the slates of the school, a square white building, formerly a gentleman's country-house. In front of it was a well-kept lawn with a few clipped holly-trees. At the rear, a quarter of an acre of land was enclosed for the use of the boys. Strollers on the common could hear, at certain hours, a hubbub of voices and racing footsteps from within the boundary wall. Sometimes, when the strollers were boys themselves, they climbed to the coping, and saw on the other side a piece of common trampled bare and brown, with a few square yards of concrete, so worn into hollows as to be unfit for its original use as a ball-alley. Also a long shed, a pump, a door defaced by innumerable incised inscriptions, the back of the house in much worse repair than the front, and about fifty boys in tailless jackets and broad, turned-down collars. When the fifty boys perceived a stranger on the wall they rushed to the spot with a wild halloo, overwhelmed him with insult and defiance, and dislodged him by a volley of clods, stones, lumps of bread, and such other projectiles as were at hand.

On this rainy spring afternoon a brougham stood at the door of Moncrief House. The coachman, enveloped in a white india-rubber coat, was bestirring himself a little after the recent shower. Within-doors, in the drawing-room, Dr. Moncrief was conversing with a stately lady aged about thirty-five, elegantly dressed, of attractive manner, and only falling short of absolute beauty in her complexion, which was deficient in freshness.

"No progress whatever, I am sorry to say," the doctor was remarking.

"That is very disappointing," said the lady, contracting her brows.

"It is natural that you should feel disappointed," replied the doctor. "I would myself earnestly advise you to try the effect of placing him at some other——" The doctor stopped. The lady's face had lit up with a wonderful smile, and she had raised her hand with a bewitching gesture of protest.

"Oh, no, Dr. Moncrief," she said. "I am not disappointed with *you*; but I am all the more angry with Cashel, because I know that if he makes no progress with you it must be his own fault. As to taking him away, that is out of the question. I should not have a moment's peace if he were out of your care. I will speak to him very seriously about his conduct before I leave to-day. You will give him another trial, will you not?"

"Certainly. With the greatest pleasure," exclaimed the doctor, confusing himself by an inept attempt at gallantry. "He shall stay as long as you please. But"—here the doctor became grave again—"you cannot too strongly urge upon him the importance of hard work at the present time, which may be said to be the turning-point of his career as a student. He is now nearly seventeen; and he has so little inclination for study that I doubt whether he could pass the examination necessary to entering one of the universities. You probably wish him to take a degree before he chooses a profession."

"Yes, of course," said the lady, vaguely, evidently assenting to the doctor's remark rather than expressing a conviction of her own. "What profession would you advise for him? You know so much better than I."

"Hum!" said Dr. Moncrief, puzzled. "That would doubtless depend to some extent on his own taste——"

"Not at all," said the lady, interrupting him with vivacity. "What does he know about the world, [illegible] boy? His own taste is sure to be something ridiculous. Very likely he would want to go on the stage, like me."

"Oh! Then you would not encourage any tendency of that sort?"

"Most decidedly not. I hope he has no such idea."

"Not that I am aware of. He shows so little ambition to excel in any particular branch that I should say his choice of a profession may be best determined by his parents. I am, of course, ignorant whether his relatives possess influence likely to be of use to him. That is often the chief point to be considered, particularly in cases like your son's, where no special aptitude manifests itself."

"I am the only relative he ever had, poor fellow," said the lady, with a pensive smile. Then, seeing an expression of astonishment on the doctor's face, she added, quickly, "They are all dead."

"Dear me!"

"However," she continued, "I have no doubt I can make plenty of interest for him. But it is difficult to get anything nowadays without passing competitive examinations. He really must work. If he is lazy he ought to be punished."

The doctor looked perplexed. "The fact is," he said, "your son can hardly be dealt with as a child any longer. He is still quite a boy in his habits and ideas; but physically he is rapidly springing up into a young man. That reminds me of another point on which I will ask you to speak earnestly to him. I must tell you that he has attained some distinction among his school-fellows here as an athlete. Within due bounds I do not discourage bodily exercises: they are a recognized part of our system. But I am sorry to say that Cashel has not escaped that tendency to violence which sometimes results from the possession of unusual strength and dexterity. He actually fought with one of the village youths in the main street of Panley some months ago. The matter did not come to my ears immediately; and, when it did, I allowed it to pass unnoticed, as he had interfered, it seems, to protect one of the smaller boys. Unfortunately he was guilty of a much more serious fault a little later. He and a companion of his had obtained leave from me to walk to Panley Abbey together. I afterwards found that their real object was to witness a prize-fight that took place—illegally, of course—on the common. Apart from the deception practised, I think the taste they betrayed a dangerous one; and I felt bound to punish them by a severe imposition, and restriction to the grounds for six weeks. I do not hold, however, that everything has been done in these cases when a boy has been punished. I set a high value on a mother's influence for softening the natural roughness of boys."

"I don't think he minds what I say to him in the least," said the lady, with a sympathetic air, as if she pitied the doctor in a matter that chiefly concerned him. "I will speak to him about it, of course. Fighting is an unbearable habit. His father's people were always fighting; and they never did any good in the world."

"If you will be so kind. There are just the three points: the necessity for greater—much greater—application to his studies; a word to him on the subject of rough habits; and to sound him as to his choice of a career. I agree with you in not attaching much importance to his ideas on that subject as yet. Still, even a boyish fancy may be turned to account in rousing the energies of a lad."

"Quite so," assented the lady. "I will certainly give him a lecture."

The doctor looked at her mistrustfully, thinking perhaps that she herself would be the better for a lecture on her duties as a mother. But he did not dare to tell her so; indeed, having a prejudice to the effect that actresses were deficient in natural feeling, he doubted the use of daring. He also feared that the subject of her son was beginning to bore her; and, though a doctor of divinity, he was as reluctant as other men to be found wanting in address by a pretty woman. So he rang the bell, and bade the servant send Master Cashel Byron. Presently a door was heard to open below, and a buzz of distant voices became audible. The doctor fidgeted and tried to think of something to say, but his invention failed him: he sat in silence while the inarticulate buzz rose into a shouting of "By-ron!" "Cash!" the latter cry imitated from the summons usually addressed to cashiers in haberdashers' shops. Finally there was a piercing yell of "Mam-ma-a-a-ah!" apparently in explanation of the demand for Byron's attendance in the drawing-room. The doctor reddened. Mrs. Byron smiled. Then the door below closed, shutting out the tumult, and footsteps were heard on the stairs.

"Come in," cried the doctor, encouragingly.

Master Cashel Byron entered blushing; made his way awkwardly to his mother, and kissed the critical expression which was on her upturned face as she examined his appearance. Being only seventeen, he had not yet acquired a taste for kissing. He inexpertly gave Mrs. Byron quite a shock by the collision of their teeth. Conscious of the failure, he drew himself upright, and tried to hide his hands, which were exceedingly dirty, in the scanty folds of his jacket. He was a well-grown youth, with neck and shoulders already strongly formed, and short auburn hair curling in little rings close to his scalp. He had blue eyes, and an expression of boyish good-humor, which, however, did not convey any assurance of good temper.

"How do you do, Cashel?" said Mrs. Byron, in a queenly manner, after a prolonged look at him.

"Very well, thanks," said he, grinning and avoiding her eye.

"Sit down, Byron," said the doctor. Byron suddenly forgot how to sit down, and looked irresolutely from one chair to another. The doctor made a brief excuse, and left the room; much to the relief of his pupil.

"You have grown greatly, Cashel. And I am afraid you are very awkward." Cashel colored and looked gloomy.

"I do not know what to do with you," continued

Mrs. Byron. "Dr. Moncrief tells me that you are very idle and rough."

"I am not," said Cashel, sulkily. "It is bec——"

"There is no use in contradicting me in that fashion," said Mrs. Byron, interrupting him sharply. "I am sure that whatever Dr. Moncrief says is perfectly true."

"He is always talking like that," said Cashel, plaintively. "I can't learn Latin and Greek; and I don't see what good they are. I work as hard as any of the rest—except the regular stews, perhaps. As to my being rough, that is all because I was out one day with Gully Molesworth, and we saw a crowd on the common, and when we went to see what was up it was two men fighting. It wasn't our fault that they came there to fight."

"Yes; I have no doubt that you have fifty good excuses, Cashel. But I will not allow any fighting; and you really must work harder. Do you ever think of how hard *I* have to work to pay Dr. Moncrief one hundred and twenty pounds a year for you?"

"I work as hard as I can. Old Moncrief seems to think that a fellow ought to do nothing else from morning till night but write Latin verses. Tatham, that the doctor thinks such a genius, does all his constering from cribs. If I had a crib I could conster as well—very likely better."

"You are very idle, Cashel; I am sure of that. It is too provoking to throw away so much money every year for nothing. Besides, you must soon be thinking of a profession."

"I shall go into the army," said Cashel. "It is the only profession for a gentleman."

Mrs. Byron looked at him for a moment as if amazed at his presumption. But she checked herself and only said, "I am afraid you will have to choose some less expensive profession than that. Besides, you would have to pass an examination to enable you to enter the army; and how can you do that unless you study?"

"Oh, I shall do that all right enough when the time comes."

"Dear, dear! You are beginning to speak so coarsely, Cashel. After all the pains I took with you at home!"

"I speak the same as other people," he replied, sullenly. "I don't see the use of being so jolly particular over every syllable. I used to have to stand no end of chaff about my way of speaking. The fellows here know all about you, of course."

"All about me?" repeated Mrs. Byron, looking at him curiously.

"All about your being on the stage, I mean," said Cashel. "You complain of my fighting; but I should have a precious bad time of it if I didn't lick the chaff out of some of them."

Mrs. Byron smiled doubtfully to herself, and remained silent and thoughtful for a moment. Then she rose and said, glancing at the weather, "I must go now, Cashel, before another shower begins. And do, pray, try to learn something, and to polish your manners a little. You will have to go to Cambridge soon, you know."

"Cambridge!" exclaimed Cashel, excited. "When, mamma? When?"

"Oh, I don't know. Not yet. As soon as Dr. Moncrief says you are fit to go."

"That will be long enough," said Cashel, much dejected by this reply. "He will not turn one hundred and twenty pounds a year out of doors in a hurry. He kept big Inglis here until he was past twenty. Look here, mamma; might I go at the end of this half? I feel sure I should do better at Cambridge than here."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Byron, decidedly. "I do not expect to have to take you away from Dr. Moncrief for the next eighteen months at least, and not then unless you work properly. Now don't grumble, Cashel; you annoy me exceedingly when you do. I am sorry I mentioned Cambridge to you."

"I would rather go to some other school, then," said Cashel, ruefully. "Old Moncrief is so awfully down on me."

"You only want to leave because you are expected to work here; and that is the very reason I wish you to stay."

Cashel made no reply; but his face darkened ominously.

"I have a word to say to the doctor before I go," she added, reseating herself. "You may return to your play now. Good-bye, Cashel." And she again raised her face to be kissed.

"Good-bye," said Cashel, huskily, as he turned to ward the door, pretending that he had not noticed her action.

"Cashel!" she said, with emphatic surprise. "Are you sulky?"

"No," he retorted, angrily. "I haven't said anything. I suppose my manners are not good enough. I'm very sorry; but I can't help it."

"Very well," said Mrs. Byron, firmly. "You can go, Cashel. I am not pleased with you."

Cashel walked out of the room and slammed the door. At the foot of the staircase he was stopped by a boy about a year younger than himself, who accosted him eagerly.

"How much did she give you?" he whispered.

"Not a halfpenny," replied Cashel, grinding his teeth.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed the other, much disappointed. "That was beastly mean."

"She's as mean as she can be," said Cashel. "It's all old Monkey's fault. He has been cramming her with lies about me. But she's just as bad as he is. I tell you, Gully, I hate my mother."

"Oh, come!" said Gully, shocked. "That's a little too strong, old chap. But she certainly ought to have stood something."

"I don't know what you intend to do, Gully; but I mean to bolt. If she thinks I am going to stick here for the next two years she is jolly much mistaken."

"It would be an awful lark to bolt," said Gully, with a chuckle. "But," he added, seriously, "if you really mean it, by George, I'll go too! Wilson has just given me a thousand lines; and I'll be hanged if I do them."

"Gully," said Cashel, his eyes sparkling, "I should like to see one of those chaps we saw on the common pitch into the doctor—get him on the ropes, you know."

Gully's mouth watered. "Yes," he said, breathlessly; "particularly the fellow they called the Fibber. Just one round would be enough for the old beggar. Let's come out into the playground; I shall catch it if I am found here."

II

THAT night there was just sufficient light struggling through the clouds to make Panley Common visible as a black expanse, against the lightest tone of which a piece of ebony would have appeared pale. Not a human being was stirring within a mile of Moncrief House, the chimneys of which, ghostly white on the side next the moon, threw long shadows on the silver-gray slates. The stillness had just been broken by the stroke of a quarter past twelve from a distant church tower, when, from the obscurity of one of these chimney shadows, a head emerged. It belonged to a boy, whose body presently wriggled through an open skylight. When his shoulders were through he turned himself face upward, seized the miniature gable in which the skylight was set, drew himself completely out, and made his way stealthily down to the parapet. He was immediately followed by another boy.

The door of Moncrief House was at the left-hand corner of the front, and was surmounted by a tall porch, the top of which was flat and could be used as a balcony. A wall, of the same height as the porch, connected the house front with the boundary wall, and formed part of the enclosure of a fruit garden which lay at the side of the house between the lawn and the playground. When the two boys had crept along the parapet to a point directly above the porch they stopped, and each lowered a pair of boots to the balcony by means of fishing-lines. When the boots were safely landed, their owners let the lines drop and reëntered the house by another skylight. A minute elapsed. Then they reappeared on the top of the porch, having come out through the window to which it served as a balcony. Here they put on their boots, and stepped on to the wall of the fruit garden. As they crawled along it, the hindmost boy whispered.

"I say, Cashy."

"Shut up, will you," replied the other under his breath. "What's wrong?"

"I should like to have one more go at old mother Moncrief's pear-tree; that's all."

"There are no pears on it this season, you fool."

"I know. This is the last time we shall go this road, Cashy. Usen't it to be a lark? Eh?"

"If you don't shut up, it won't be the last time; for you'll be caught. Now for it."

Cashel had reached the outer wall, and he finished his sentence by dropping from it to the common. Gully held his breath for some moments after the noise made by his companion's striking the ground. Then he demanded in a whisper whether all was right.

"Yes," returned Cashel, impatiently. "Drop as soft as you can."

Gully obeyed; and was so careful lest his descent should shake the earth and awake the doctor, that his feet shrank from the concussion. He alighted in a sitting posture, and remained there, looking up at Cashel with a stunned expression.

"Crikey!" he ejaculated, presently. "That was a buster."

"Get up, I tell you," said Cashel. "I never saw such a jolly ass as you are. Here, up with you! Have you got your wind back?"

"I should think so. Bet you twopence I'll be first at the cross roads. I say, let's pull the bell at the front gate and give an awful yell before we start. They'll never catch us."

"Yes," said Cashel, ironically; "I fancy I see myself doing it, or you either. Now then. One, two, three, and away."

They ran off together, and reached the cross roads about eight minutes later; Gully completely out of breath, and Cashel nearly so. Here, according to their plan, Gully was to take the north road and run to Scotland, where he felt sure that his uncle's gamekeeper would hide him. Cashel was to go to sea; where, he argued, he could, if his affairs became desperate, turn pirate, and achieve eminence in that profession by adding a chivalrous humanity to the ruder virtues for which it is already famous.

Cashel waited until Gully had recovered from his race. Then he said.

"Now, old fellow, we've got to separate."

Gully, thus confronted with the lonely realities of his scheme, did not like the prospect. After a moment's reflection he exclaimed:

"Damme, old chap, but I'll come with you. Scotland may go and be hanged."

But Cashel, being the stronger of the two, was as anxious to get rid of Gully as Gully was to cling to him. "No," he said; "I'm going to rough it; and you wouldn't be able for that. You're not strong enough for a sea life. Why, man, those sailor fellows are as hard as nails; and even they can hardly stand it."

"Well, then, do you come with me," urged Gully. "My uncle's gamekeeper won't mind. He's a jolly good sort; and we shall have no end of shooting."

"That's all very well for you, Gully; but I don't know your uncle; and I'm not going to put myself under a compliment to his gamekeeper. Besides, we should run too much risk of being caught if we went through the country together. Of course I should be only too glad if we could stick to one another, but it wouldn't do; I feel certain we should be nabbed. Good-bye."

"But wait a minute," pleaded Gully. "Suppose they do try to catch us; we shall have a better chance against them if there are two of us."

"Stuff!" said Cashel. "That's all boyish nonsense. There will be at least six policemen sent after us; and even if I did my very best, I could barely lick two if they came on together. And you would hardly be able for one. You just keep moving, and don't go near any railway station, and you will get to Scotland all safe enough. Look here, we have wasted five minutes already. I have got my wind now, and I must be off. Good-bye."

Gully disdained to press his company on Cashel any further. "Good-bye," he said, mournfully shaking his hand. "Success, old chap."

"Success," echoed Cashel, grasping Gully's hand with a pang of remorse for leaving him. "I'll write to you as soon as I have anything to tell you. It may be some months, you know, before I get regularly settled."

He gave Gully a final squeeze, released him, and darted off along the road leading to Panley Village. Gully looked after him for a moment, and then ran away Scotlandwards.

Panley Village consisted of a High Street, with an old-fashioned inn at one end, a modern railway station and bridge at the other, and a pump and pound midway between. Cashel stood for a while in the shadow under the bridge before venturing along the broad, moonlit street. Seeing no one, he stepped out at a brisk walking pace; for he had by this time reflected that it was not possible to run all the way to the Spanish main. There was, however, another person stirring in the village besides Cashel. This was Mr. Wilson, Dr. Moncrief's professor of mathematics, who was returning from a visit to the theatre. Mr. Wilson had an impression that theatres were wicked places, to be visited by respectable men only on rare occasions and by stealth. The only plays he went openly to witness were those of Shakespeare; and his favorite was "As You Like It"; Rosalind in tights having an attraction for him which he missed in Lady Macbeth in petticoats. On this evening he had seen Rosalind impersonated by a famous actress, who had come to a neighboring town on a starring tour. After the performance he had returned to Panley, supped there with a friend, and was now making his way back to Moncrief House, of which he had been intrusted with the key. He was in a frame of mind favorable for the capture of a runaway boy. An habitual delight in being too clever for his pupils, fostered by frequently overreaching them in mathematics, was just now stimulated by the effect of a liberal supper and the roguish consciousness of having been to the play. He saw and recognized Cashel as he approached the village pound. Understanding the situation at once, he hid behind the pump, waited until the unsuspecting truant was passing within arm's-length, and then stepped out and seized him by the collar of his jacket.

"Well, sir," he said. "What are you doing here at this hour? Eh?"

Cashel, scared and white, looked up at him, and could not answer a word.

"Come along with me," said Wilson, sternly.

Cashel suffered himself to be led for some twenty yards. Then he stopped and burst into tears.

"There is no use in my going back," he said, sobbing. "I have never done any good there. I can't go back."

"Indeed," said Wilson, with magisterial sarcasm. "We shall try to make you do better in future." And he forced the fugitive to resume his march.

Cashel, bitterly humiliated by his own tears, and exasperated by a certain cold triumph which his captor evinced on witnessing them, did not go many steps farther without protest.

"You needn't hold me," he said, angrily; "I can walk without being held." The master tightened his grasp and pushed his captive forward. "I won't run away, sir," said Cashel, more humbly, shedding fresh tears. "Please let me go," he added, in a suffocated voice, trying to turn his face toward his captor. But Wilson twisted him back again, and urged him still onward. Cashel cried out passionately, "Let me go," and struggled to break loose.

"Come, come, Byron," said the master, controlling him with a broad, strong hand; "none of your nonsense, sir."

Then Cashel suddenly slipped out of his jacket, turned on Wilson, and struck up at him savagely with his right fist. The master received the blow just beside the point of his chin; and his eyes seemed to Cashel to roll up and fall back into his head with the shock. He drooped forward for a moment, and fell in a heap face downward. Cashel recoiled, wringing his hand to relieve the tingling of his knuckles, and terrified by the thought that he had committed murder. But Wilson presently moved and dispelled that misgiving. Some of Cashel's fury returned as he shook his fist at his prostrate adversary, and, exclaiming, "*You* won't brag much of having seen me cry," wrenched the jacket from him with unnecessary violence, and darted away at full speed.

Mr. Wilson, though he was soon conscious and able to rise, did not feel disposed to stir for a long time.

He began to moan with a dazed faith that some one would eventually come to him with sympathy and assistance. Five minutes elapsed, and brought nothing but increased cold and pain. It occurred to him that if the police found him they would suppose him to be drunk; also that it was his duty to go to them and give them the alarm. He rose, and, after a struggle with dizziness and nausea, concluded that his most pressing duty was to get to bed, and leave Dr. Moncrief to recapture his ruffianly pupil as best he could.

Accordingly, at half-past one o'clock, the doctor was roused by a knocking at his chamber-door, outside which he presently found his professor of mathematics, bruised, muddy, and apparently inebriated. Five minutes elapsed before Wilson could get his principal's mind on the right track. Then the boys were awakened and the roll called. Byron and Molesworth were reported absent. No one had seen them go; no one had the least suspicion of how they got out of the house. One little boy mentioned the skylight; but observing a threatening expression on the faces of a few of the bigger boys, who were fond of fruit, he did not press his suggestion, and submitted to be snubbed by the doctor for having made it. It was nearly three o'clock before the alarm reached the village, where the authorities tacitly declined to trouble themselves about it until morning. The doctor, convinced that the lad had gone to his mother, did not believe that any search was necessary, and contented himself with writing a note to Mrs. Byron describing the attack on Mr. Wilson, and expressing regret that no proposal having for its object the readmission of Master Byron to the academy could be entertained.

The pursuit was now directed entirely after Molesworth, as it was plain, from Mr. Wilson's narrative, that he had separated from Cashel outside Panley. Information was soon forthcoming. Peasants in all parts of the country had seen, they said, "a lad that might be him." The search lasted until five o'clock next afternoon, when it was rendered superfluous by the appearance of Gully in person, footsore and repentant. After parting from Cashel and walking two miles, he had lost heart and turned back. Half way to the cross roads he had reproached himself with cowardice, and resumed his flight. This time he placed eight miles betwixt himself and Moncrief House. Then he left the road to make a short cut through a plantation, and went astray. After wandering until morning, thinking dejectedly of the story of the babes in the wood, he saw a woman working in a field, and asked her the shortest way to Scotland. She had never heard of Scotland; and when he asked the way to Panley she lost patience and threatened to set her dog at him. This discouraged him so much that he was afraid to speak to the other strangers whom he met. Having the sun as a compass, he oscillated between Scotland and Panley according to the fluctuation of his courage. At last he yielded to hunger, fatigue, and loneliness, devoted his remaining energy to the task of getting back to school; struck the common at last, and hastened to surrender himself to the doctor, who menaced him with immediate expulsion.

Gully was greatly concerned at having to leave the place he had just run away from, and earnestly begged the doctor to give him another chance. His prayer was granted. After a prolonged lecture, the doctor, in consideration of the facts that Gully had been seduced by the example of a desperate associate, that he had proved the sincerity of his repentance by coming back of his own accord, and had not been accessory to the concussion of the brain from which Mr. Wilson supposed himself to be suffering, accepted his promise of amendment and gave him a free pardon. It should be added that Gully kept his promise, and, being now the oldest pupil, graced his position by becoming a moderately studious, and, on one occasion, even a sensible lad.

Meanwhile Mrs. Byron, not suspecting the importance of the doctor's note, and happening to be in a hurry when it arrived, laid it by unopened, intending to read it at her leisure. She would have forgotten it altogether but for a second note which came two days later, requesting some acknowledgment of the previous communication. On learning the truth she immediately drove to Moncrief House, and there abused the doctor as he had never been abused in his life before; after which she begged his pardon, and implored him to assist her to recover her darling boy. When he suggested that she should offer a reward for information and capture she indignantly refused to spend a farthing on the little ingrate; wept and accused herself of having driven him away by her unkindness; stormed and accused the doctor of having treated him harshly; and, finally, said that she would give one hundred pounds to have him back, but that she would never speak to him again. The doctor promised to undertake the search, and would have promised anything to get rid of his visitor. A reward of fifty pounds was offered. But whether the fear of falling into the clutches of the law for murderous assault stimulated Cashel to extraordinary precaution, or whether he had contrived to leave the country in the four days which elapsed between his flight and the offer of the reward, the doctor's efforts were unsuccessful; and he had to confess their failure to Mrs. Byron. She agreeably surprised him by writing a pleasant letter to the effect that it was very provoking, and that she could never thank him sufficiently for all the trouble he had taken. And so the matter dropped.

Long after that generation of scholars had passed away from Moncrief House, the name of Cashel Byron was remembered there as that of a hero who, after many fabulous exploits, had licked a master and bolted to the Spanish Main.

III

THERE was at this time in the city of Melbourne, in Australia, a wooden building, above the door of which was a board inscribed "GYMNASIUM AND SCHOOL OF ARMS." In the long, narrow entry hung a framed manuscript which set forth that Ned Skene, ex-champion of England and the colonies, was to be heard of within daily by gentlemen desirous of becoming proficient in the art of self-defence. Also the terms on which Mrs. Skene, assisted by a competent staff of professors, would give lessons in dancing, deportment, and calisthenics.

One evening a man sat smoking on a common wooden chair outside the door of this establishment. On the ground beside him were some tin tacks and a hammer, with which he had just nailed to the doorpost a card on which was written in a woman's handwriting: "*Wanted a male attendant who can keep accounts. Inquire within.*" The smoker was a powerful man, with a thick neck that swelled out beneath his broad, flat ear-lobes. He had small eyes, and large teeth, over which his lips were slightly parted in a good-humored but cunning smile. His hair was black and close-cut; his skin indurated; and the bridge of his nose smashed level with his face. The tip, however, was uninjured. It was squab and glossy, and, by giving the whole feature an air of being on the point of expanding to its original shape, produced a snubbed expression which relieved the otherwise formidable aspect of the man, and recommended him as probably a modest and affable fellow when sober and unprovoked. He seemed about fifty years of age, and was clad in a straw hat and a suit of white linen.

He had just finished his pipe when a youth stopped to read the card on the doorpost. This youth was attired in a coarse sailor's jersey and a pair of gray tweed trousers, which he had considerably outgrown.

"Looking for a job?" inquired the ex-champion of England and the colonies.

The youth blushed and replied, "Yes. I should like to get something to do."

Mr. Skene stared at him with stern curiosity. His professional pursuits had familiarized him with the manners and speech of English gentlemen, and he immediately recognized the shabby sailor lad as one of that class.

"Perhaps you're a scholar," said the prize-fighter, after a moment's reflection.

"I have been at school; but I didn't learn much there," replied the youth. "I think I could bookkeep by double entry," he added, glancing at the card.

"Double entry! What's that?"

"It's the way merchants' books are kept. It is called so because everything is entered twice over."

"Ah!" said Skene, unfavorably impressed by the system; "once is enough for me. What's your weight?"

"I don't know," said the lad, with a grin.

"Not know your own weight!" exclaimed Skene. "That ain't the way to get on in life."

"I haven't been weighed since I was in England," said the other, beginning to get the better of his shyness. "I was eight stone four then; so you see I am only a light-weight."

"And what do you know about light-weights? Perhaps, being so well educated, you know how to fight. Eh?"

"I don't think I could fight you," said the youth, with another grin.

Skene chuckled; and the stranger, with boyish communicativeness, gave him an account of a real fight (meaning, apparently, one between professional pugilists) which he had seen in England. He went on to describe how he had himself knocked down a master with one blow when running away from school. Skene received this sceptically, and cross-examined the narrator as to the manner and effect of the blow, with the result of convincing himself that the story was true. At the end of a quarter of an hour the lad had commended himself so favorably by his conversation that the champion took him into the gymnasium, weighed him, measured him, and finally handed him a pair of boxing gloves and invited him to show what he was made of. The youth, though impressed by the prize-fighter's attitude with a hopeless sense of the impossibility of reaching him, rushed boldly at him several times, knocking his face on each occasion against Skene's left fist, which seemed to be ubiquitous, and to have the property of imparting the consistency of iron to padded leather. At last the novice directed a frantic assault at the champion's nose, rising on his toes in his excitement as he did so. Skene struck up the blow with his right arm, and the impetuous youth spun and stumbled away until he fell supine in a corner, rapping his head smartly on the floor at the same time. He rose with unabated cheerfulness and offered to continue the combat; but Skene declined any further exercise just then, and, much pleased with his novice's game, promised to give him a scientific education and make a man of him.

The champion now sent for his wife, whom he revered as a preëminently sensible and well-mannered woman. The newcomer could see in her only a ridiculous dancing-mistress; but he treated her with great deference, and thereby improved the favorable opinion which Skene had already formed of him. He related to her how, after running away from school, he had made his way to Liverpool, gone to the docks, and contrived to hide himself on board a ship bound for Australia. Also how he had suffered severely from hunger and thirst before he discovered himself; and how, notwithstanding his unpopular position as stowaway, he had been fairly treated as soon as he had shown that he was willing to work. And in proof that he was still willing, and had profited by his maritime experience, he offered to sweep the floor of the gymnasium then and there. This proposal convinced the Skenes, who had listened to his story like children listening to a fairy tale, that he was not too much of a gentleman to do rough work, and it was presently arranged that he should thenceforth board and lodge with them, have five shillings a week for pocket-money, and be man-of-all-work, servant, gymnasium-attendant, clerk, and apprentice to the ex-champion of England and the colonies.

He soon found his bargain no easy one. The gymnasium was open from nine in the morning until eleven at night, and the athletic gentlemen who came there not only ordered him about without ceremony, but varied the monotony of being set at naught by the invincible Skene by practising what he taught them on the person of his apprentice, whom they pounded with great relish, and threw backwards, forwards, and over their shoulders as though he had been but a senseless effigy, provided for that purpose. Meanwhile the champion looked on and laughed, being too lazy to redeem his promise of teaching the novice to defend himself. The latter, however, watched the lessons which he saw daily given to others, and, before the end of a month, he so completely turned the tables on the amateur pugilists of Melbourne that Skene one day took occasion to remark that he was growing uncommon clever, but that gentlemen liked to be played easy with, and that he should be careful not to knock them about too much. Besides these bodily exertions, he had to keep account of gloves and foils sold and bought, and of the fees due both to Mr. and Mrs. Skene. This was the most irksome part of his duty; for he wrote a large, schoolboy hand, and was not quick at figures. When he at last began to assist his master in giving lessons the accounts had fallen into arrear, and Mrs. Skene had to resume her former care of them; a circumstance which gratified her husband, who regarded it as a fresh triumph of her superior intelligence. Then a Chinaman was engaged to do the more menial work of the establishment. "Skene's novice," as he was now generally called, was elevated to the rank of assistant professor to the champion, and became a person of some consequence in the gymnasium.

He had been there more than nine months, and had developed from an active youth into an athletic young man of eighteen, when an important conversation took place between him and his principal. It was evening, and the only persons in the gymnasium were Ned Skene, who sat smoking at his ease with his coat off, and the novice, who had just come down-stairs from his bedroom, where he had been preparing for a visit to the theatre.

"Well, my gentleman," said Skene, mockingly; "you're a fancy man, you are. Gloves too! They're too small for you. Don't you get hittin' nobody with them on, or you'll mebbe sprain your wrist."

"Not much fear of that," said the novice, looking at his watch, and, finding that he had some minutes to spare, sitting down opposite Skene.

"No," assented the champion. "When you rise to be a regular professional you won't care to spar with nobody without you're well paid for it."

"I may say I am in the profession already. You don't call me an amateur, do you?"

"Oh, no," said Skene, soothingly; "not so bad as that. But mind you, my boy, I don't call no man a fighting-man what ain't been in the ring. You're a sparrer, and a clever, pretty sparrer; but sparring ain't the real thing. Some day, please God, we'll make up a little match for you, and show what you can do without the gloves."

"I would just as soon have the gloves off as on," said the novice, a little sulkily.

"That's because you have a heart as big as a lion," said Skene, patting him on the shoulder. But the novice, who was accustomed to hear his master pay the same compliment to his patrons whenever they were seized with fits of boasting (which usually happened when they got beaten), looked obdurate and said nothing.

"Sam Ducket, of Milltown, was here to-day while you was out giving Captain Noble his lesson," continued Skene, watching his apprentice's face cunningly. "Now Sam is a real fighting-man, if you like."

"I don't think much of him. He's a liar, for one thing."

"That's a failing of the profession. I don't mind telling *you* so," said Skene, mournfully. Now the novice had found out this for himself, already. He never, for instance, believed the accounts which his master gave of the accidents and conspiracies which had led to his being defeated three times in the ring. However, as Skene had won fifteen battles, his next remark was undeniable. "Men fight none the worse for being liars. Sam Ducket bet Ebony Muley in twenty minutes."

"Yes," said the novice, scornfully; "and what is Ebony Muley? A wretched old nigger nearly sixty years old, who is drunk seven days in the week, and would sell a fight for a glass of brandy! Ducket ought to have knocked him out of time in seventy seconds. Ducket has no science."

"Not a bit," said Ned. "But he has lots of game."

"Pshaw! Come, now, Ned; you know as well as I do that that is one of the stalest commonplaces going. If a fellow knows how to box, they always say he has science but no pluck. If he doesn't know his right hand from his left, they say that he isn't clever but that he is full of game."

Skene looked with secret wonder at his pupil, whose powers of observation and expression sometimes seemed to him almost to rival those of Mrs. Skene. "Sam was saying something like that to-day," he remarked. "He says you're only a sparrer, and that you'd fall down with fright if you was put into a twenty-four-foot ring."

The novice flushed. "I wish I had been here when Sam Ducket said that."

"Why, what could you ha' done to him?" said Skene, his small eyes twinkling.

"I'd have punched his head; that's what I could and would have done to him."

"Why, man, he'd eat you."

"He might. And he might eat you too, Ned, if he had salt enough with you. He talks big because he knows I have no money; and he pretends he won't strip for less than fifty pounds a side."

"No money!" cried Skene. "I know them as'll make up fifty pound before twelve to-morrow for any man as I will answer for. There'd be a start for a young man! Why, my fust fight was for five shillings in Tott'nam Fields; and proud I was when I won it. I don't want to set you on to fight a crack like Sam Ducket anyway against your inclinations; but don't go for to say that money isn't to be had. Let Ned Skene pint to a young man and say, 'That's the young man as Ned backs,' and others will come for'ard —ay, crowds of 'em."

The novice hesitated. "Do you think I ought to, Ned?" he said.

"That ain't for me to say," said Skene, doggedly. "I know what I would ha' said at your age. But perhaps you're right to be cautious. I tell you the truth, I wouldn't care to see you whipped by the like of Sam Ducket."

"Will you train me if I challenge him?"

"Will I train you!" echoed Skene, rising with enthusiasm. "Ay will I train you, and put my money on you, too; and you shall knock fireworks out of him, my boy, as sure as my name's Ned Skene."

"Then," cried the novice, reddening with excitement, "I'll fight him. And if I lick him you will have to hand over your belt as champion of the colonies to me."

"So I will," said Skene, affectionately. "Don't stay out late; and don't for your life touch a drop of liquor. You must go into training to-morrow."

This was Cashel Byron's first professional engagement.

CHAPTER I

WILTSTOKEN CASTLE was a square building with circular bastions at the corners, each bastion terminating skyward in a Turkish minaret. The southwest face was the front, and was pierced by a Moorish arch fitted with glass doors, which could be secured on occasion by gates of fantastically hammered iron. The arch was enshrined by a Palladian portico, which rose to the roof, and was surmounted by an open pediment, in the cleft of which stood a black-marble figure of an Egyptian, erect, and gazing steadfastly at the midday sun. On the ground beneath was an Italian terrace with two great stone elephants at the ends of the balustrade. The windows on the upper story were, like the entrance, Moorish; but the principal ones below were square bays, mullioned. The castle was considered grand by the illiterate; but architects and readers of books on architecture condemned it as a nondescript mixture of styles in the worst possible taste. It stood on an eminence surrounded by hilly woodland, thirty acres of which were enclosed as Wiltstoken Park. Half a mile south was the little town of Wiltstoken, accessible by rail from London in about two hours.

Most of the inhabitants of Wiltstoken were Conservatives. They stood in awe of the castle; and some of them would at any time have cut half a dozen of their oldest friends to obtain an invitation to dinner, or even a bow in public, from Miss Lydia Carew, its orphan mistress. This Miss Carew was a remarkable person. She had inherited the castle and park from her aunt, who had considered her niece's large fortune in railways and mines incomplete without land. So many other legacies had Lydia received from kinsfolk who hated poor relations, that she was now, in her twenty-fifth year, the independent possessor of an annual income equal to the year's earnings of five hundred workmen, and under no external compulsion to do anything in return for it. In addition to the advantage of being a single woman in unusually easy circumstances, she enjoyed a reputation for vast learning and exquisite culture. It was said in Wiltstoken that she knew forty-eight living languages and all dead ones; could play on every known musical instrument; was an accomplished painter, and had written poetry. All this might as well have been true as far as the Wiltstokeners were concerned, since she knew more than they. She had spent her life travelling with her father, a man of active mind and bad digestion, with a taste for sociology, science in general, and the fine arts. On these subjects he had written books, by which he had earned a considerable reputation as a critic and philosopher. They were the outcome of much reading, observation of men and cities, sightseeing, and theatre-going, of which his daughter had done her share, and indeed, as she grew more competent and he weaker and older, more than her share.

He had had to combine health-hunting with pleasure-seeking; and, being very irritable and fastidious, had schooled her in self-control and endurance by harder lessons than those which had made her acquainted with the works of Greek and German philosophers long before she understood the English into which she translated them.

When Lydia was in her twenty-first year her father's health failed seriously. He became more dependent on her; and she anticipated that he would also become more exacting in his demands on her time. The contrary occurred. One day, at Naples, she had arranged to go riding with an English party that was staying there. Shortly before the appointed hour he asked her to make a translation of a long extract from Lessing. Lydia, in whom self-questionings as to the justice of her father's yoke had been for some time stirring, paused thoughtfully for perhaps two seconds before she consented. Carew said nothing, but he presently intercepted a servant who was bearing an apology to the English party, read the note, and went back to his daughter, who was already busy at Lessing.

"Lydia," he said, with a certain hesitation, which she would have ascribed to shyness had that been at all credible of her father when addressing her, "I wish you never to postpone your business to literary trifling."

She looked at him with the vague fear that accompanies a new and doubtful experience; and he, dissatisfied with his way of putting the case, added, "It is of greater importance that you should enjoy yourself for an hour than that my book should be advanced. Far greater!"

Lydia, after some consideration, put down her pen and said, "I shall not enjoy riding if there is anything else left undone."

"I shall not enjoy your writing if your excursion is given up for it," he said. "I prefer your going."

Lydia obeyed silently. An odd thought struck her that she might end the matter gracefully by kissing him. But as they were unaccustomed to make demonstrations of this kind, nothing came of the impulse. She spent the day on horseback, reconsidered her late rebellious thoughts, and made the translation in the evening.

Thenceforth Lydia had a growing sense of the power she had unwittingly been acquiring during her long subordination. Timidly at first, and more boldly as she became used to dispense with the parental leading-strings, she began to follow her own bent in selecting subjects for study, and even to defend certain recent developments of art against her father's conservatism. He approved of this independent mental activity on her part, and repeatedly warned her not to pin her faith more on him than on any other critic. She once told him that one of her incentives to disagree with him was the pleasure it gave her to find out ultimately that he was right. He replied gravely:

"That pleases me, Lydia, because I believe you. But such things are better left unsaid. They seem to belong to the art of pleasing, which you will perhaps soon be tempted to practise, because it seems to all young people easy, well paid, amiable, and a mark of good breeding. In truth it is vulgar, cowardly, egotistical, and insincere: a virtue in a shopman; a vice in a free woman. It is better to leave genuine praise unspoken than to expose yourself to the suspicion of flattery."

Shortly after this, at his desire, she spent a season in London, and went into English polite society, which she found to be in the main a temple for the worship of wealth and a market for the sale of virgins. Having become familiar with both the cult and the trade elsewhere, she found nothing to interest her except the English manner of conducting them; and the novelty of this soon wore off. She was also incommoded by her involuntary power of inspiring affection in her own sex. Impulsive girls she could keep in awe; but old women, notably two aunts who had never paid her any attention during her childhood, now persecuted her with slavish fondness, and tempted her by mingled entreaties and bribes to desert her father and live with them for the remainder of their lives. Her reserve fanned their longing to have her for a pet; and, to escape them, she returned to the Continent with her father, and ceased to hold any correspondence with London. Her aunts declared themselves deeply hurt, and Lydia was held to have treated them very injudiciously; but when they died, and their wills became public, it was found that they had vied with one another in enriching her.

When she was twenty-five years old the first startling event of her life took place. This was the death of her father at Avignon. No endearments passed between them even on that occasion. She was sitting opposite to him at the fireside one evening, reading aloud, when he suddenly said, "My heart has stopped, Lydia. Good-bye!" and immediately died. She had some difficulty in quelling the tumult that arose when the bell was answered. The whole household felt bound to be overwhelmed, and took it rather ill that she seemed neither grateful to them nor disposed to imitate their behavior.

Carew's relatives agreed that he had made a most unbecoming will. It was a brief document, dated five years before his death, and was to the effect that he bequeathed to his dear daughter Lydia all he possessed. He had, however, left her certain private instructions. One of these, which excited great indignation in his family, was that his body should be conveyed to Milan, and there cremated. Having disposed of her father's remains as he had directed, she came to set her affairs in order in England, where she inspired much hopeless passion in the toilers in Lincoln's Inn Fields and Chancery Lane, and agreeably surprised her solicitors by evincing a capacity for business, and a patience with the law's delay, that seemed incompatible with her age and sex. When all was arranged, and she was once more able to enjoy perfect tranquillity, she returned to Avignon, and there discharged her last duty to her father. This was to open a letter she had found in his desk, inscribed by his hand: "For Lydia. To be read by her at leisure when I and my affairs shall be finally disposed of." The letter ran thus :

"MY DEAR LYDIA,—I belong to the great company of disappointed men. But for you, I should now write myself down a failure like the rest. It is only a few years since it first struck me that although I had failed in many ambitions with which (having failed) I need not trouble you now, I had achieved some success as a father. I had no sooner made this discovery than it began to stick in my thoughts that you could draw no other conclusion from the course of our life together than that I have, with entire selfishness, used you throughout as my mere amanuensis and clerk, and that you are under no more obligation to me for your attainments than a slave is to his master for the strength which enforced labor has given to his muscles. Lest I should leave you suffering from so mischievous and oppressive an influence as a sense of injustice, I now justify myself to you.

"I have never asked you whether you remember your mother. Had you at any time broached the subject, I should have spoken quite freely to you on it; but as some wise instinct led you to avoid it, I was content to let it rest until circumstances such as the present should render further reserve unnecessary. If any regret at having known so little of the woman who gave you birth troubles you, shake it off without remorse. She was the most disagreeable person I ever knew. I speak dispassionately. All my bitter personal feeling against her is as dead while I write as it will be when you read. I have even come to cherish tenderly certain of her characteristics which you have inherited, so that I confidently say that I never, since the perishing of the infatuation in which I married, felt more kindly toward her than I do now. I made the best, and she the worst, of our union for six years; and then we parted. I permitted her to give what account of the separation she pleased, and allowed her about five times as much money as she had any right to expect. By these means I induced her to leave me in undisturbed possession of you, whom I had already, as a measure of precaution, carried off to Belgium. The reason why we never visited England during her lifetime was that she could, and probably would, have made my previous conduct and my hostility to popular religion an excuse for wresting you from me. I need say no more of her, and am sorry it was necessary to mention her at all.

"I will now tell you what induced me to secure you for myself. It was not natural affection; I did not love you then, and I knew that you would be a serious encumbrance to me. But, having brought you into the world, and then broken through my engagements with your mother, I felt bound to see that you should not suffer for my mistake. Gladly would I have persuaded myself that she was (as the gossips said) the fittest person to have charge of you; but I knew better, and made up my mind to discharge my responsibility as well as I could. In course of time you became useful to me; and, as you know, I made use of you without scruple, but never without regard to your own advantage. I always kept a secretary to do whatever I considered mere copyist's work. Much as you did for me, I think I may say with truth that I never imposed a task of absolutely no educational value on you. I fear you found the hours you spent over my money affairs very irksome; but I need not apologize for that now: you must already know by experience how necessary a knowledge of business is to the possessor of a large fortune.

"I did not think, when I undertook your education, that I was laying the foundation of any comfort for myself. For a long time you were only a good girl, and what ignorant people called a prodigy of learning. In your circumstances a commonplace child might have been both. I subsequently came to contemplate your existence with a pleasure which I never derived from the contemplation of my own. I have not succeeded, and shall not succeed in expressing the affection I feel for you, or the triumph with which I find that what I undertook as a distasteful and thankless duty has rescued my life and labor from waste. My literary travail, seriously as it has occupied us both, I now value only for the share it has had in educating you; and you will be guilty of no disloyalty to me when you come to see that though I sifted as much sand as most men, I found no gold. I ask you to remember, then, that I did my duty to you long before it became pleasurable or even hopeful. And, when you are older and have learned from your mother's friends how I failed in my duty to her, you will perhaps give me some credit for having conciliated the world for your sake by abandoning habits and acquaintances which, whatever others may have thought of them, did much while they lasted to make life endurable to me.

"Although your future will not concern me, I often find myself thinking of it. I fear you will soon find that the world has not yet provided a place and a sphere of action for wise and well-instructed women. In my younger days, when the companionship of my fellows was a necessity to me, I voluntarily set aside my culture, relaxed my principles, and acquired common tastes, in order to fit myself for the society of the only men within my reach; for, if I had to live among bears, I had rather be a bear than a man. Let me warn you against this. Never attempt to accommodate yourself to the world by self-degradation. Be patient; and you will enjoy frivolity all the more because you are not frivolous: much as the world will respect your knowledge all the more because of its own ignorance.

"Some day, I expect and hope, you will marry. You will then have an opportunity of making an irremediable mistake, against the possibility of which no advice of mine or subtlety of yours can guard you. I think you will not easily find a man able to satisfy in you that desire to be relieved of the responsibility of thinking out and ordering our course of life that makes us each long for a guide whom we can thoroughly trust. If you fail, remember that your father, after suffering a bitter and complete disappointment in his wife, yet came to regard his marriage as the happiest event in his career. Let me remind you also, since you are so rich, that it would be a great folly for you to be jealous of your own income, and to limit your choice of a husband to those already too rich to marry for money. No vulgar adventurer will be able to recommend himself to you; and better men will be at least as much frightened as attracted by your wealth. The only class against which I need warn you is that to which I myself am supposed to belong. Never think that a man must prove a suitable and satisfying friend for you merely because he has read much criticism; that he must feel the influences of art as you do because he knows and adopts the classification of names and schools with which you are familiar; or that because he agrees with your favorite authors he must necessarily interpret their words to himself as you understand them. Beware of men who have read more than they have worked, or who love to read better than to work. Beware of painters, poets, musicians, and artists of all sorts, except very great artists: beware even of them as husbands and fathers. Self-satisfied workmen who have learned their business well, whether they be chancellors of the exchequer or farmers, I recommend to you as, on the whole, the most tolerable class of men I have met.

"I shall make no further attempt to advise you. As fast as my counsels rise to my mind follow reflections that convince me of their futility.

"You may perhaps wonder why I never said to you what I have written down here. I have tried to do so and failed. If I understand myself aright, I have written these lines mainly to relieve a craving to express my affection for you. The awkwardness which an over-civilized man experiences in admitting that he is something more than an educated stone prevented me from confusing you by demonstrations of a kind I had never accustomed you to. Besides, I wish this assurance of my love—my last word—to reach you when no further commonplaces to blur the impressiveness of its simple truth are possible.

"I know I have said too much; and I feel that I have not said enough. But the writing of this letter has been a difficult task. Practised as I am with my pen, I have never, even in my earliest efforts, composed with such labor and sense of inadequacy——"

Here the manuscript broke off. The letter had never been finished.

CHAPTER II

In the month of May, seven years after the flight of the two boys from Moncrief House, a lady sat in an island of shadow which was made by a cedar-tree in the midst of a glittering green lawn. She did well to avoid the sun, for her complexion was as delicately tinted as mother-of-pearl. She was a small, graceful woman, with sensitive lips and nostrils, green eyes, with quiet, unarched brows, and ruddy gold hair, now shaded by a large, untrimmed straw hat. Her dress of Indian muslin, with half-sleeves terminating at the elbows in wide ruffles, hardly covered her shoulders, where it was supplemented by a scarf through which a glimpse of her throat was visible in a nest of soft Tourkaris lace. She was reading a little ivory-bound volume—a miniature edition of the second part of Goethe's "Faust."

As the afternoon wore on and the light mellowed, the lady dropped her book and began to think and dream, unconscious of a prosaic black object crossing the lawn towards her. This was a young gentleman in a frock coat. He was dark, and had a long, grave face, with a reserved expression, but not ill-looking.

"Going so soon, Lucian?" said the lady, looking up as he came into the shadow.

Lucian looked at her wistfully. His name, as she uttered it, always stirred him vaguely. He was fond of finding out the reasons of things, and had long ago decided that this inward stir was due to her fine pronunciation. His other intimates called him Looshn.

"Yes," he said. "I have arranged everything, and have come to give an account of my stewardship, and to say good-bye."

He placed a garden-chair near her and sat down. She laid her hands one on the other in her lap, and composed herself to listen.

"First," he said, "as to the Warren Lodge. It is let for a month only; so you can allow Mrs. Goff to have it rent free in July if you still wish to. I hope you will not act so unwisely."

She smiled, and said, "Who are the present tenants? I hear that they object to the dairymaids and men crossing the elm vista."

"We must not complain of that. It was expressly stipulated when they took the lodge that the vista should be kept private for them. I had no idea at that time that you were coming to the castle, or I should of course have declined such a condition."

"But we do keep it private for them; strangers are not admitted. Our people pass and repass once a day on their way to and from the dairy; that is all."

"It seems churlish, Lydia; but this, it appears, is a special case—a young gentleman, who has come to recruit his health. He needs daily exercise in the open air; but he cannot bear observation, and he has only a single attendant with him. Under these circumstances I agreed that they should have the sole use of the elm vista. In fact, they are paying more rent than would be reasonable without this privilege."

"I hope the young gentleman is not mad."

"I satisfied myself before I let the lodge to him that he would be a proper tenant," said Lucian, with reproachful gravity. "He was strongly recommended to me by Lord Worthington, whom I believe to be a man of honor, notwithstanding his inveterate love of sport. As it happens, I expressed to him the suspicion you have just suggested. Worthington vouched for the tenant's sanity, and offered to take the lodge in his own name and be personally responsible for the good behavior of this young invalid, who has, I fancy, upset his nerves by hard reading. Probably some college friend of Worthington's."

"Perhaps so. But I should rather expect a college friend of Lord Worthington's to be a hard rider or drinker than a hard reader."

"You may be quite at ease, Lydia. I took Lord Worthington at his word so far as to make the letting to him. I have never seen the real tenant. But, though I do not even recollect his name, I will venture to answer for him at second-hand."

"I am quite satisfied, Lucian; and I am greatly obliged to you. I will give orders that no one shall go to the dairy by way of the warren. It is natural that he should wish to be out of the world."

"The next point," resumed Lucian, "is more important, as it concerns you personally. Miss Goff is willing to accept your offer. And a most unsuitable companion she will be for you!"

"Why, Lucian?"

"On all accounts. She is younger than you, and therefore cannot chaperone you. She has received only an ordinary education, and her experience of society is derived from local subscription balls. And, as she is not unattractive, and is considered a beauty in Wiltstoken, she is self-willed, and will probably take your patronage in bad part."

"Is she more self-willed than I?"

"You are not self-willed, Lydia; except that you are deaf to advice."

"You mean that I seldom follow it. And so you think I had better employ a professional companion —a decayed gentlewoman—than save this young girl from going out as a governess and beginning to decay at twenty-three?"

"The business of getting a suitable companion, and the pleasure or duty of relieving poor people, are two different things, Lydia."

"True, Lucian. When will Miss Goff call?"

"This evening. Mind; nothing is settled as yet. If you think better of it on seeing her you have only to treat her as an ordinary visitor and the subject will drop. For my own part, I prefer her sister; but she will not leave Mrs. Goff, who has not yet recovered from the shock of her husband's death."

Lydia looked reflectively at the little volume in her hand, and seemed to think out the question of Miss Goff. Presently, with an air of having made up her mind, she said,

"Can you guess which of Goethe's characters you remind me of when you try to be worldly-wise for my sake?"

"When I try—— What an extraordinary irrelevance! I have not read Goethe lately. Mephistopheles, I suppose. But I did not mean to be cynical."

"No; not Mephistopheles, but Wagner—with a difference. Wagner taking Mephistopheles instead of Faust for his model." Seeing by his face that he did not relish the comparison, she added, "I am paying you a compliment. Wagner represents a very clever man."

"The saving clause is unnecessary," he said, somewhat sarcastically. "I know your opinion of me quite well, Lydia."

She looked quickly at him. Detecting the concern in her glance, he shook his head sadly, saying, "I must go now, Lydia. I leave you in charge of the housekeeper until Miss Goff arrives."

She gave him her hand, and a dull glow came into his gray jaws as he took it. Then he buttoned his coat and walked gravely away. As he went, she watched the sun mirrored in his glossy hat, and drowned in his respectable coat. She sighed, and took up Goethe again.

But after a little while she began to be tired of sitting still, and she rose and wandered through the park for nearly an hour, trying to find the places in which she had played in her childhood during a visit to her late aunt. She recognized a great toppling Druid's altar that had formerly reminded her of Mount Sinai threatening to fall on the head of Christian in "The

Pilgrim's Progress." Farther on she saw and avoided a swamp in which she had once earned a scolding from her nurse by filling her stockings with mud. Then she found herself in a long avenue of green turf, running east and west, and apparently endless. This seemed the most delightful of all her possessions, and she had begun to plan a pavilion to build near it, when she suddenly recollected that this must be the elm vista of which the privacy was so stringently insisted upon by her invalid tenant at the Warren Lodge. She fled into the wood at once, and, when she was safe there, laughed at the oddity of being a trespasser in her own domain. She made a wide detour in order to avoid intruding a second time; consequently, after walking for a quarter of an hour, she lost herself. The trees seemed never-ending; she began to think she must possess a forest as well as a park. At last she saw an opening. Hastening toward it, she came again into the sunlight, and stopped, dazzled by an apparition which she at first took to be a beautiful statue, but presently recognized, with a strange glow of delight, as a living man.

To so mistake a gentleman exercising himself in the open air on a nineteenth-century afternoon would, under ordinary circumstances, imply incredible ignorance either of men or statues. But the circumstances in Miss Carew's case were not ordinary; for the man was clad in a jersey and knee-breeches of white material, and his bare arms shone like those of a gladiator. His broad pectoral muscles, in their white covering, were like slabs of marble. Even his hair, short, crisp, and curly, seemed like burnished bronze in the evening light. It came into Lydia's mind that she had disturbed an antique god in his sylvan haunt. The fancy was only momentary; for she perceived that there was a third person present; a man impossible to associate with classic divinity. He looked like a well-to-do groom, and was contemplating his companion much as a groom might contemplate an exceptionally fine horse. He was the first to see Lydia; and his expression as he did so plainly showed that he regarded her as a most unwelcome intruder. The statue-man, following his sinister look, saw her too, but with different feelings; for his lips parted, his color rose, and he stared at her with undisguised admiration and wonder. Lydia's first impulse was to turn and fly; her next, to apologize for her presence. Finally she went away quietly through the trees.

The moment she was out of their sight she increased her pace almost to a run. The day was too warm for rapid movement, and she soon stopped and listened. There were the usual woodland sounds; leaves rustling, grasshoppers chirping, and birds singing; but not a human voice or footstep. She began to think that the god-like figure was only the Hermes of Praxiteles, suggested to her by Goethe's classical Sabbat, and changed by a day-dream into the semblance of a living reality. The groom must have been one of those incongruities characteristic of dreams—probably a reminiscence of Lucian's statement that the tenant of the Warren Lodge had a single male attendant. It was impossible that this glorious vision of manly strength and beauty could be substantially a student broken down by excessive study. That irrational glow of delight, too, was one of the absurdities of dreamland; otherwise she should have been ashamed of it.

Lydia made her way back to the castle in some alarm as to the state of her nerves, but dwelling on her vision with a pleasure that she would not have ventured to indulge had it concerned a creature of flesh and blood. Once or twice it recurred to her so vividly that she asked herself whether it could have been real. But a little reasoning convinced her that it must have been an hallucination.

"If you please, madam," said one of her staff of domestics, a native of Wiltstoken, who stood in deep awe of the lady of the castle, "Miss Goff is waiting for you in the drawing-room."

The drawing-room of the castle was a circular apartment, with a dome-shaped ceiling broken into gilt ornaments resembling thick bamboos, which projected vertically downward like stalagmites. The heavy chandeliers were loaded with flattened brass balls, magnified fac-similes of which crowned the uprights of the low, broad, massively-framed chairs, which were covered in leather stamped with Japanese dragon designs in copper-colored metal. Near the fireplace was a great bronze bell of Chinese shape, mounted like a mortar on a black wooden carriage for use as a coal-scuttle. The wall was decorated with large gold crescents on a ground of light blue.

In this barbaric rotunda Miss Carew found awaiting her a young lady of twenty-three, with a well-developed, resilient figure, and a clear complexion, porcelain surfaced, and with a fine red in the cheeks. The lofty pose of her head expressed an habitual sense of her own consequence given her by the admiration of the youth of the neighborhood, which was also, perhaps, the cause of the neatness of her inexpensive black dress, and of her irreproachable gloves, boots, and hat. She had been waiting to introduce herself to the lady of the castle for ten minutes in a state of nervousness that culminated as Lydia entered.

"How do you do, Miss Goff. Have I kept you waiting? I was out."

"Not at all," said Miss Goff, with a confused impression that red hair was aristocratic, and dark brown (the color of her own) vulgar. She had risen to shake hands, and now, after hesitating a moment to consider what etiquette required her to do next, resumed her seat. Miss Carew sat down too, and gazed thoughtfully at her visitor, who held herself rigidly erect, and, striving to mask her nervousness, unintentionally looked disdainful.

"Miss Goff," said Lydia, after a silence that made her speech impressive, "will you come to me on a long visit? In this lonely place I am greatly in want of a friend and companion of my own age and position. I think you must be equally so."

Alice Goff was very young, and very determined to accept no credit that she did not deserve. With the unconscious vanity and conscious honesty of youth, she proceeded to set Miss Carew right as to her social position, not considering that the lady of the castle probably understood it better than she did herself, and indeed thinking it quite natural that she should be mistaken.

"You are very kind," she replied, stiffly; "but our positions are quite different, Miss Carew. The fact is that I cannot afford to live an idle life. We are very poor, and my mother is partly dependent on my exertions."

"I think you will be able to exert yourself to good purpose if you come to me," said Lydia, unimpressed. "It is true that I shall give you very expensive habits; but I will of course enable you to support them."

"I do not wish to contract expensive habits," said Alice, reproachfully. "I shall have to content myself with frugal ones throughout my life."

"Not necessarily. Tell me, frankly: how had you proposed to exert yourself? As a teacher, was it not?"

Alice flushed, but assented.

"You are not at all fitted for it; and you will end by marrying. As a teacher you could not marry well. As an idle lady, with expensive habits, you will marry very well indeed. It is quite an art to know how to be rich—an indispensable art, if you mean to marry a rich man."

"I have no intention of marrying," said Alice, loftily. She thought it time to check this cool aristocrat. "If I come at all I shall come without any ulterior object."

"That is just what I had hoped. Come without condition, or second thought of any kind."

"But—" began Alice, and stopped, bewildered by the pace at which the negotiation was proceeding. She murmured a few words, and waited for Lydia to proceed. But Lydia had said her say, and evidently expected a reply, though she seemed assured of having her own way, whatever Alice's views might be.

"I do not quite understand, Miss Carew. What duties?—what would you expect of me?"

"A great deal," said Lydia, gravely. "Much more than I should from a mere professional companion."

"But I am a professional companion," protested Alice.

"Whose?"

Alice flushed again, angrily this time. "I did not mean to say—"

"You do not mean to say that you will have nothing to do with me," said Lydia, stopping her quietly. "Why are you so scrupulous, Miss Goff? You will be close to your home, and can return to it at any moment if you become dissatisfied with your position here."

Fearful that she had disgraced herself by ill manners; loath to be taken possession of as if her wishes were of no consequence when a rich lady's whim was to be gratified; suspicious—since she had often heard gossiping tales of the dishonesty of people in high positions—lest she should be cheated out of the salary she had come resolved to demand; and withal unable to defend herself against Miss Carew, Alice caught at the first excuse that occurred to her.

"I should like a little time to consider," she said.

"Time to accustom yourself to me, is it not? You can have as long as you plea—"

"Oh, I can let you know to-morrow," interrupted Alice, officiously.

"Thank you. I will send a note to Mrs. Goff to say that she need not expect you back until to-morrow."

"But I did not mean—I am not prepared to stay," remonstrated Alice, feeling that she was being entangled in a snare.

"We shall take a walk after dinner, then, and call at your house, where you can make your preparations. But I think I can supply you with all you will require."

Alice dared make no further objection. "I am afraid," she stammered, "you will think me horribly rude; but I am so useless, and you are so sure to be disappointed, that—that—"

"You are not rude, Miss Goff; but I find you very shy. You want to run away and hide from new faces and new surroundings." Alice, who was self-possessed and even overbearing in Wiltstoken society, felt that she was misunderstood, but did not know how to vindicate herself. Lydia resumed, "I have formed my habits in the course of my travels, and so live without ceremony. We dine early—at six."

Alice had dined at two, but did not feel bound to confess it.

"Let me show you your room," said Lydia, rising. "This is a curious drawing-room," she added, glancing around. "I only use it occasionally to receive visitors." She looked about her again with some interest, as if the apartment belonged to some one else, and led the way to a room on the first floor, furnished as a lady's bed-chamber. "If you dislike this," she said, "or cannot arrange it to suit you, there are others, of which you can have your choice. Come to my boudoir when you are ready."

"Where is that?" said Alice, anxiously.

"It is— You had better ring for some one to show you. I will send you my maid."

Alice, even more afraid of the maid than of the mistress, declined hastily. "I am accustomed to attend to myself, Miss Carew," with proud humility.

"You will find it more convenient to call me Lydia," said Miss Carew. "Otherwise you will be supposed to refer to my grandaunt, a very old lady." She then left the room.

Alice was fond of thinking that she had a womanly taste and touch in making a room pretty. She was accustomed to survey with pride her mother's drawing-room, which she had garnished with cheap cretonnes, Japanese paper fans, and knick-knacks in ornamental pottery. She felt now that if she slept once in the bed before her, she could never be content in her mother's house again. All that she had read and believed of the beauty of cheap and simple ornament, and the vulgarity of costliness, recurred to her as a hypocritical paraphrase of the "sour grapes" of the fox in the fable. She pictured to herself with a shudder the effect of a sixpenny Chinese umbrella in that fireplace, a cretonne valance to that bed, or chintz curtains to those windows. There was in the room a series of mirrors consisting of a great glass in which she could see herself at full length, another framed in the carved oaken dressing-table, and smaller ones of various shapes fixed to jointed arms that turned every way. To use them for the first time was like having eyes in the back of the head. She had never seen herself from all points of view before. As she gazed, she strove no tto be ashamed of her dress; but even her face and figure, which usually afforded her unqualified delight, seemed robust and middle-class in Miss Carew's mirrors.

"After all," she said, seating herself on a chair that was even more luxurious to rest in than to look at; "putting the lace out of the question—and my old lace that belongs to mamma is quite as valuable—her whole dress cannot have cost much more than mine. At any rate, it is not worth much more, whatever she may have chosen to pay for it."

But Alice was clever enough to envy Miss Carew her manners more than her dress. She would not admit to herself that she was not thoroughly a lady; but she felt that Lydia, in the eye of a stranger, would answer that description better than she. Still, as far as she had observed, Miss Carew was exceedingly cool in her proceedings, and did not take any pains to please those with whom she conversed. Alice had often made compacts of friendship with young ladies, and had invited them to call her by her Christian name; but on such occasions she had always called them "dear" or "darling," and, while the friendship lasted (which was often longer than a month, for Alice was a steadfast girl), had never met them without exchanging an embrace and a hearty kiss.

"And nothing," she said, springing from the chair as she thought of this, and speaking very resolutely, "shall tempt me to believe that there is anything vulgar in sincere affection. I shall be on my guard against this woman."

Having settled that matter for the present, she resumed her examination of the apartment, and was more and more attracted by it as she proceeded. For, thanks to her eminence as a local beauty, she had not that fear of beautiful and rich things which renders abject people incapable of associating costliness with comfort. Had the counterpane of the bed been her own, she would have unhesitatingly converted it into a ball-dress. There were toilet appliances of which she had never felt the need, and could only guess the use. She looked with despair into the two large closets, thinking how poor a show her three dresses, her ulster, and her few old jackets would make there. There was also a dressing-room with a marble bath that made cleanliness a luxury instead of one of the sternest of the virtues, as it seemed at home. Yet she remarked that though every object was more or less ornamental, nothing had been placed in the rooms for the sake of ornament alone. Miss Carew, judged by her domestic arrangements, was a utilitarian before everything. There was a very handsome chimney-piece; but as there was nothing on the mantel-board, Alice made a faint effort to believe that it was inferior in point of taste to that in her own bedroom, which was covered with blue cloth, surrounded by fringe and brass-headed nails, and laden with photographs in plush frames.

The striking of the hour reminded her that she had forgotten to prepare for dinner. She hastily took off her hat, washed her hands, spent another minute among the mirrors, and was summoning courage to ring the bell, when a doubt occurred to her. Ought she to put on her gloves before going down or not? This kept her in perplexity for many seconds. At last she resolved to put her gloves in her pocket, and be guided as to their further disposal by the example of her hostess. Then, not daring to hesitate any longer, she rang the bell, and was presently joined by a French lady of polished manners—Miss Carew's maid—who conducted her to the boudoir, a hexagonal apartment that, Alice thought, a sultana might have envied. Lydia was there, reading. Alice noted with relief that she had not changed her dress, and that she was ungloved.

Miss Goff did not enjoy the dinner. There was a butler who seemed to have nothing to do but stand at a buffet and watch her. There was also a swift, noiseless footman who presented himself at her elbow at intervals and compelled her to choose on the instant between unfamiliar things to eat and drink. She envied these men their knowledge of society, and shrank from their criticism. Once, after taking a piece of asparagus in her hand, she was deeply mortified at seeing her hostess consume the vegetable with the aid of a knife and fork; but the footman's back was turned to her just then, and the butler, oppressed by the heat of the weather, was in a state of abstraction bordering on slumber. On the whole, by dint of imitating Miss Carew, who did not plague her with any hostess-like vigilance, she came off without discredit to her breeding.

Lydia, on her part, acknowledged no obligation to entertain her guest by chatting, and enjoyed her thoughts and her dinner in silence. Alice began to be fascinated by her, and to wonder what she was thinking about. She fancied that the footman was not quite free from the same influence. Even the butler might have been meditating himself to sleep on the subject. Alice felt tempted to offer her a penny for her thoughts. But she dared not be so familiar as yet. And, had the offer been made and accepted, butler, footman, and guest would have been plunged into equal confusion by the explanation, which would have run thus:

"I saw a vision of the Hermes of Praxiteles in a sylvan haunt to-day; and I am thinking of that."

CHAPTER III.

Next day Alice accepted Miss Carew's invitation. Lydia, who seemed to regard all conclusions as foregone when she had once signified her approval of them, took the acceptance as a matter of course. Alice thereupon thought fit to remind her that there were other persons to be considered. So she said,

"I should not have hesitated yesterday but for my mother. It seems so heartless to leave her."

"You have a sister at home, have you not?"

"Yes. But she is not very strong, and my mother requires a great deal of attention." Alice paused, and added in a lower voice, "She has never recovered from the shock of my father's death."

"Your father is then not long dead?" said Lydia in her usual tone.

"Only two years," said Alice, coldly. "I hardly know how to tell my mother that I am going to desert her."

"Go and tell her to-day, Alice. You need not be afraid of hurting her. Grief of two years' standing is only a bad habit."

Alice started, outraged. Her mother's grief was sacred to her; and yet it was by her experience of her mother that she recognized the truth of Lydia's remark, and felt that it was unanswerable. She frowned; but the frown was lost: Miss Carew was not looking at her. Then she rose and went to the door, where she stopped to say,

"You do not know our family circumstances. I will go now and try to prevail on my mother to let me stay with you."

"Please come back in good time for dinner," said Lydia, unmoved. "I will introduce you to my cousin Lucian Webber. I have just received a telegram from him. He is coming down with Lord Worthington. I do not know whether Lord Worthington will come to dinner or not. He has an invalid friend at the Warren, and Lucian does not make it clear whether he is coming to visit him or me. However, it is of no consequence; Lord Worthington is only a young sportsman. Lucian is a clever man, and will be an eminent one some day. He is secretary to a Cabinet Minister, and is very busy; but we shall probably see him often while the Whitsuntide holidays last. Excuse my keeping you waiting at the door to hear that long history. Adieu!" She waved her hand; Alice suddenly felt that it was possible to be very fond of Miss Carew.

She spent an unhappy afternoon with her mother. Mrs. Goff had had the good-fortune to marry a man of whom she was afraid, and who made himself very disagreeable whenever his house or his children were neglected in the least particular. Making a virtue of necessity, she had come to be regarded in Wiltstoken as a model wife and mother. At last, when a drag ran over Mr. Goff and killed him, she was left almost penniless, with two daughters on her hands. In this extremity she took refuge in grief, and did nothing. Her daughters settled their father's affairs as best they could, moved her into a cheap house, and procured a strange tenant for that in which they had lived during many years. Janet, the elder sister, a student by disposition, employed herself as a teacher of the scientific fashions in modern female education, rumors of which had already reached Wiltstoken. Alice was unable to teach mathematics and moral science; but she formed a dancing-class, and gave lessons in singing and in a language which she believed to be current in France, but which was not intelligible to natives of that country travelling through Wiltstoken. Both sisters were devoted to one another and to their mother. Alice, who had enjoyed the special affection of her self-indulgent father, preserved some regard for his memory, though she could not help wishing that his affection had been strong enough to induce him to save a provision for her. She was ashamed, too, of the very recollection of his habit of getting drunk at races, regattas, and other national festivals, by an accident at one of which he had met his death.

Alice went home from the castle expecting to find the household divided between joy at her good-fortune and grief at losing her; for her views of human nature and parental feeling were as yet pure superstitions. But Mrs. Goff at once became envious of the luxury her daughter was about to enjoy, and overwhelmed her with accusations of want of feeling, eagerness to desert her mother, and vain love of pleasure. Alice, who loved Mrs. Goff so well that she had often told her as many as five different lies in the course of one afternoon to spare her some unpleasant truth, and would have scouted as infamous any suggestion that her parent was more selfish than saintly, soon burst into tears, declaring that she would not return to the castle, and that nothing would have induced her to stay there the night before had she thought that her doing so could give pain at home. This alarmed Mrs. Goff, who knew by experience that it was easier to drive Alice upon rash resolves than to shake her in them afterwards. Fear of incurring blame in Wiltstoken for wantonly opposing her daughter's obvious interests, and of losing her share of Miss Carew's money and countenance, got the better of her jealousy. She lectured Alice severely for her headstrong temper, and commanded her, on her duty not only to her mother, but also and chiefly to her God, to accept Miss Carew's offer with thankfulness, and to insist upon a definite salary as soon as she had, by good behavior, made her society indispensable at the castle. Alice, dutiful as she was, reduced Mrs. Goff to entreaties, and even to symptoms of an outburst of violent grief for the late Mr. Goff, before she consented to obey her. She would wait, she said, until Janet, who was absent teaching, came in, and promised to forgive her for staying away the previous night (Mrs. Goff had falsely represented that Janet had been deeply hurt, and had lain awake weeping during the small hours of the morning). The mother, seeing nothing for it but either to get rid of Alice before Janet's return or to be detected in a spiteful untruth, had to pretend that Janet was spending the evening with some friends, and to urge the unkindness of leaving Miss Carew lonely. At last Alice washed away the traces of her tears and returned to the castle, feeling very miserable, and trying to comfort herself with the reflection that her sister had been spared the scene which had just passed.

Lucian Webber had not arrived when she reached the castle. Miss Carew glanced at her melancholy face as she entered, but asked no questions. Presently, however, she put down her book, considered for a moment, and said,

"It is nearly three years since I have had a new dress." Alice looked up with interest. "Now that I have you to help me to choose, I think I will be extravagant enough to renew my entire wardrobe. I wish you would take this opportunity to get some things for yourself. You will find that my dressmaker, Madame Smith, is to be depended on for work, though she is expensive and dishonest. When we are tired of Wiltstoken we will go to Paris, and be millinered there; but in the meantime we can resort to Madame Smith."

"I cannot afford expensive dresses," said Alice.

"I should not ask you to get them if you could not afford them. I warned you that I should give you expensive habits."

Alice hesitated. She had a healthy inclination to take whatever she could get on all occasions; and she had suffered too much from poverty not to be more thankful for her good-fortune than humiliated by Miss Carew's bounty. But the thought of being driven, richly attired, in one of the castle carriages, and meeting Janet trudging about her daily tasks in cheap black serge and mended gloves, made Alice feel that she deserved all her mother's reproaches. However, it was obvious that a refusal would be of no material benefit to Janet, so she said,

"Really I could not think of imposing on your kindness in this wholesale fashion. You are too good to me."

"I will write to Madame Smith this evening," said Lydia.

Alice was about to renew her protest more faintly, when a servant entered and announced Mr. Webber. She stiffened herself to receive the visitor. Lydia's manner did not alter in the least. Lucian, whose demeanor resembled Miss Goff's rather than his cousin's, went through the ceremony of introduction with solemnity, and was received with a dash of scorn; for Alice, though secretly awe-stricken, bore herself tyrannically towards men from habit.

In reply to Alice, Mr. Webber thought the day cooler than yesterday. In reply to Lydia, he admitted that the resolution of which the leader of the opposition had given notice was tantamount to a vote of censure on the government. He was confident that ministers would have a majority. He had no news of any importance. He had made the journey down with Lord Worthington, who had come to Wiltstoken to see the invalid at the Warren. He had promised to return with him in the seven-thirty train.

When they went down to dinner, Alice, profiting by her experience of the day before, faced the servants with composure, and committed no solecisms. Unable to take part in the conversation, as she knew little of literature and nothing of politics, which were the staple of Lucian's discourse, she sat silent, and reconsidered an old opinion of hers that it was ridiculous and ill-bred in a lady to discuss anything that was in the newspapers. She was impressed by Lucian's cautious and somewhat dogmatic style of conversation, and concluded that he knew everything. Lydia seemed interested in his information, but quite indifferent to his opinions.

Towards half-past seven Lydia proposed that they should walk to the railway station, adding, as a reason for going, that she wished to make some bets with Lord Worthington. Lucian looked grave at this, and Alice, to show that she shared his notions of propriety, looked shocked. Neither demonstration had the slightest effect on Lydia. On their way to the station he remarked,

"Worthington is afraid of you, Lydia—needlessly, as it seems."

"Why?"

"Because you are so learned, and he so ignorant. He has no culture save that of the turf. But perhaps you have more sympathy with his tastes than he supposes."

"I like him because I have not read the books from which he has borrowed his opinions. Indeed, from their freshness, I should not be surprised to learn that he had them at first hand from living men, or even from his own observation of life."

"I may explain to you, Miss Goff," said Lucian, "that Lord Worthington is a young gentleman—"

"Whose calendar is the racing calendar," interposed Lydia, "and who interests himself in favorites and outsiders much as Lucian does in prime-ministers and independent radicals. Would you like to go to Ascot, Alice?"

Alice answered, as she felt Lucian wished her to answer, that she had never been to a race, and that she had no desire to go to one.

"You will change your mind in time for next year's meeting. A race interests every one, which is more than can be said for the opera or the Academy."

"I have been at the Academy," said Alice, who had made a trip to London once.

"Indeed!" said Lydia. "Were you in the National Gallery?"

"The National Gallery! I think not. I forget."

"I know many persons who never miss an Academy, and who do not know where the National Gallery is. Did you enjoy the pictures, Alice?"

"Oh, very much indeed."

"You will find Ascot far more amusing."

"Let me warn you," said Lucian to Alice, "that my cousin's pet caprice is to affect a distaste for art, to which she is passionately devoted; and for literature, in which she is profoundly read."

"Cousin Lucian," said Lydia, "should you ever be cut off from your politics, and disappointed in your ambition, you will have an opportunity of living upon art and literature. Then I shall respect your opinion of their satisfactoriness as a staff of life. As yet you have only tried them as a sauce."

"Discontented, as usual," said Lucian.

"Your one idea respecting me, as usual," replied Lydia, patiently, as they entered the station.

The train, consisting of three carriages and a van, was waiting at the platform. The engine was humming subduedly, and the driver and fireman were leaning out; the latter, a young man, eagerly watching two gentlemen who were standing before the first-class carriage, and the driver sharing his curiosity in an elderly, preoccupied manner. One of the persons thus observed was a slight, fair-haired man of about twenty-five, in the afternoon costume of a metropolitan dandy. Lydia knew the other the moment she came upon the platform as the Hermes of the day before, modernized by a straw hat, a canary-colored scarf, and a suit of a minute black-and-white chess-board pattern, with a crimson silk handkerchief overflowing the breast pocket of the coat. His hands were unencumbered by stick or umbrella; he carried himself smartly, balancing himself so accurately that he seemed to have no weight; and his expression was self-satisfied and good-humored. But—! Lydia felt that there was a "but" somewhere—that he must be something more than a handsome, powerful, and light-hearted young man.

"There is Lord Worthington," she said, indicating the slight gentleman. "Surely that cannot be his invalid friend with him?"

"That is the man that lives at the Warren," said Alice. "I know his appearance."

"Which is certainly not suggestive of a valetudinarian," remarked Lucian, looking hard at the stranger.

They had now come close to the two, and could hear Lord Worthington, as he prepared to enter the carriage, saying, "Take care of yourself, like a good fellow, won't you? Remember! if it lasts a second over the fifteen minutes, I shall drop five hundred pounds."

Hermes placed his arm round the shoulders of the young lord and gave him a playful roll. Then he said with good accent and pronunciation, but with a certain rough quality of voice, and louder than English gentlemen usually speak, "Your money is as safe as the mint, my boy."

Evidently, Alice thought, the stranger was an intimate friend of Lord Worthington. She resolved to be particular in her behavior before him, if introduced.

"Lord Worthington," said Lydia.

At the sound of her voice he climbed hastily down from the step of the carriage, and said in some confusion, "How d' do, Miss Carew. Lovely country and lovely weather—must agree awfully well with you. Plenty of leisure for study, I hope."

"Thank you; I never study now. Will you make a book for me at Ascot?"

He laughed and shook his head. "I am ashamed of my low tastes," he said; "but I haven't the heap to distinguish myself in your— Eh?"

Miss Carew was saying in a low voice, "If your friend is my tenant, introduce him to me."

Lord Worthington hesitated, looked at Lucian, seemed perplexed and amused at the same time, and at last said,

"You really wish it?"

"Of course," said Lydia. "Is there any reason—"

"Oh, not the least in the world since you wish it," he replied quickly, his eyes twinkling mischievously as he turned to his companion who was standing at the carriage door admiring Lydia, and being himself admired by the stoker. "Mr. Cashel Byron: Miss Carew."

Mr. Cashel Byron raised his straw hat and reddened a little; but, on the whole, bore himself like an eminent man who was not proud. As, however, he seemed to have nothing to say for himself, Lord Worthington hastened to avert silence by resuming the subject of Ascot. Lydia listened to him, and looked at her new acquaintance. Now that the constraint of society had banished his former expression of easy good-humor, there was something formidable in him that gave her an unaccountable thrill of pleasure. The same impression of latent danger had occurred, less agreeably, to Lucian, who was affected much as he might have been by the proximity of a large dog of doubtful temper. Lydia thought that Mr. Byron did not, at first sight, like her cousin; for he was looking at him obliquely, as though steadily measuring him.

The group was broken up by the guard admonishing the gentlemen to take their seats. Farewells were exchanged; and Lord Worthington cried, "Take care of yourself," to Cashel Byron, who replied somewhat impatiently, and with an apprehensive glance at Miss Carew, "All right! all right! Never you fear, sir." Then the train went off, and he was left on the platform with the two ladies.

"We are returning to the park, Mr. Cashel Byron," said Lydia.

"So am I," said he. "Perhaps—" Here he broke down, and looked at Alice to avoid Lydia's eye. Then they went out together.

When they had walked some distance in silence, Alice looking rigidly before her, recollecting with suspicion that he had just addressed Lord Worthington as "sir," while Lydia was admiring his light step and perfect balance, which made him seem like a man of cork; he said,

"I saw you in the park yesterday, and I thought you were a ghost. But my trai—my man, I mean—saw you too. I knew by that that you were genuine."

"Strange!" said Lydia. "I had the same fancy about you."

"What! You had!" he exclaimed, looking at her. While thus unmindful of his steps, he stumbled, and recovered himself with a stifled oath. Then he became very red, and remarked that it was a warm evening.

Miss Goff, whom he had addressed, assented. "I hope," she added, "that you are better."

He looked puzzled. Concluding, after consideration, that she had referred to his stumble, he said,

"Thank you: I didn't hurt myself."

"Lord Worthington has been telling us about you," said Lydia. He recoiled, evidently deeply mortified. She hastened to add, "He mentioned that you had come down here to recruit your health; that is all."

Cashel's features relaxed into a curious smile. But presently he became suspicious, and said, anxiously, "He didn't tell you anything else about me, did he?"

Alice stared at him superciliously. Lydia replied, "No. Nothing else."

"I thought you might have heard my name somewhere," he persisted.

"Perhaps I have; but I cannot recall in what connection. Why? Do you know any friend of mine?"

"Oh, no. Only Lord Worthington."

"I conclude then that you are celebrated, and that I have the misfortune not to know it, Mr. Cashel Byron. Is it so?"

"Not a bit of it," he replied, hastily. "There's no reason why you should ever have heard of me. I am much obliged to you for your kind inquiries," he continued, turning to Alice. "I'm quite well now, thank you. The country has set me right again."

Alice, who was beginning to have her doubts of Mr. Byron, in spite of his familiarity with Lord Worthington, smiled falsely and drew herself up a little. He turned away from her, hurt by her manner, and so ill able to conceal his feelings that Miss Carew, who was watching him, set him down privately as the most inept dissimulator she had ever met. He looked at Lydia wistfully, as if trying to read her thoughts, which now seemed to be with the setting sun, or in some equally beautiful and mysterious region. But he could see that there was no reflection of Miss Goff's scorn in her face.

"And so you really took me for a ghost," he said.

"Yes. I thought at first that you were a statue."

"A statue!"

"You do not seem flattered by that."

"It is not flattering to be taken for a lump of stone," he replied, ruefully.

Lydia looked at him thoughtfully. Here was a man whom she had mistaken for the finest image of manly strength and beauty in the world; and he was so devoid of artistic culture that he held a statue to be a distasteful lump of stone.

"I believe I was trespassing then," she said; "but I did so unintentionally. I had gone astray; for I am comparatively a stranger here, and cannot find my way about the park yet."

"It didn't matter a bit," said Cashel, impetuously. "Come as often as you want. Mellish fancies that if any one gets a glimpse of me he won't get any odds. You see he would like people to think—" Cashel checked himself, and added, in some confusion, "Mellish is mad; that's about where it is."

Alice glanced significantly at Lydia. She had already suggested that madness was the real reason of the seclusion of the tenants at the Warren. Cashel saw the glance, and intercepted it by turning to her and saying, with an attempt at conversational ease,

"How do you young ladies amuse yourselves in the country? Do you play billiards ever?"

"No," said Alice, indignantly. The question, she thought, implied that she was capable of spending her evenings on the first floor of a public-house. To her surprise, Lydia remarked,

"I play—a little. I do not care sufficiently for the game to make myself proficient. You were equipped for lawn-tennis, I think, when I saw you yesterday. Miss Goff is a celebrated lawn-tennis player. She vanquished the Australian champion last year."

It seemed that Byron, after all, was something of a courtier; for he displayed great astonishment at this feat. "The Australian champion!" he repeated. "And who may *he*— Oh! you mean the lawn-tennis champion. To be sure. Well, Miss Goff, I congratulate you. It is not every amateur that can brag of having shown a professional to a back seat."

Alice, outraged by the imputation of bragging, and certain that slang was vulgar, whatever billiards might be, bore herself still more loftily, and resolved to snub him explicitly if he addressed her again. But he did not; for they presently came to a narrow iron gate in the wall of the park, at which Lydia stopped.

"Let me open it for you," said Cashel. She gave him the key, and he seized one of the bars of the gate with his left hand, and stooped as though he wanted to look into the keyhole. Yet he opened it smartly enough.

Alice was about to pass in with a cool bow when she saw Miss Carew offer Cashel her hand. Whatever Lydia did was done so well that it seemed the right thing to do. He took it timidly and gave it a little shake, not daring to meet her eyes. Alice put out her hand stiffly. Cashel immediately stepped forward with his right foot and enveloped her fingers with the hardest clump of knuckles she had ever felt. Glancing down at this remarkable fist, she saw that it was discolored almost to blackness. Then she went in through the gate, followed by Lydia, who turned to close it behind her. As she pushed, Cashel, standing outside, grasped a bar and pulled. She at once relinquished to him the labor of shutting the gate, and smiled her thanks as she turned away; but in that moment he plucked up courage to look at her. The sensation of being so looked at was quite novel to her and very curious. She was even a little out of countenance, but not so much so as Cashel, who nevertheless could not take his eyes away.

"Do you think," said Alice, as they crossed the orchard, "that that man is a gentleman?"

"How can I possibly tell? We hardly know him."

"But what do you think? There is always a certain something about a gentleman that one recognizes by instinct."

"Is there? I have never observed it."

"Have you not?" said Alice, surprised, and beginning uneasily to fear that her superior perception of gentility was in some way the effect of her social inferiority to Miss Carew. "I thought one could always tell."

"Perhaps so," said Lydia. "For my own part I have found the same varieties of address in every class. Some people enjoy a native distinction and grace of manner—"

"That is what I mean," said Alice.

"—but they are seldom ladies and gentlemen; often actors, gypsies, and Celtic or foreign peasants. Undoubtedly one can make a fair guess, but not in the case of this Mr. Cashel Byron. Are you curious about him?"

"I!" exclaimed Alice, superbly. "Not in the least."

"I am. He interests me. I seldom see anything novel in humanity; and he is a very singular man."

"I meant," said Alice, crestfallen, "that I take no special interest in him."

Lydia, not being curious as to the exact degree of Alice's interest, merely nodded, and continued, "He may, as you suppose, be a man of humble origin who has seen something of society; or he may be a gentleman unaccustomed to society. Probably the latter. I feel no conviction either way."

"But he speaks very roughly; and his slang is disgusting. His hands are hard and quite black. Did you not notice them?"

"I noticed it all; and I think that if he were a man of low condition he would be careful not to use slang. Self-made persons are usually precise in their language; they rarely violate the written laws of society.

Besides, his pronunciation of some words is so distinct that an idea crossed me once that he might be an actor. But then it is not uniformly distinct. I am sure that he has some object or occupation in life: he has not the air of an idler. Yet I have thought of all the ordinary professions, and he does not fit one of them. This is perhaps what makes him interesting. He is unaccountable."

"He must have some position. He was very familiar with Lord Worthington."

"Lord Worthington is a sportsman, and is familiar with all sorts of people."

"Yes; but surely he would not let a jockey, or anybody of that class, put his arm round his neck, as we saw Mr. Byron do."

"That is true," said Lydia, thoughtfully. "Still," she added, clearing her brow and laughing, "I am loath to believe that he is an invalid student."

"I will tell you what he is," said Alice suddenly. "He is companion and keeper to the man with whom he lives. Do you recollect his saying 'Mellish is mad'?"

"That is possible," said Lydia. "At all events we have got a topic; and that is an important home comfort in the country."

Just then they reached the castle. Lydia lingered for a moment on the terrace. The Gothic chimneys of the Warren Lodge stood up against the long, crimson cloud into which the sun was sinking. She smiled as if some quaint idea had occurred to her; raised her eyes for a moment to the black-marble Egyptian gazing with unwavering eyes into the sky; and followed Alice in-doors.

Later on, when it was quite dark, Cashel sat in a spacious kitchen at the lodge, thinking. His companion, who had laid his coat aside, was at the fire, smoking, and watching a saucepan that simmered there. He broke the silence by remarking, after a glance at the clock, "Time to go to roost."

"Time to go to the devil," said Cashel. "I am going out."

"Yes, and get a chill. Not if I know it you don't."

"Well, go to bed yourself, and then you won't know it. I want to take a walk round the place."

"If you put your foot outside that door to-night Lord Worthington will lose his five hundred pounds. You can't lick any one in fifteen minutes if you train on night air. Get licked yourself more likely."

"Will you bet two to one that I don't stay out all night and knock the Flying Dutchman out of time in the first round afterwards? Eh?"

"Come," said Mellish, coaxingly; "have some common-sense. I'm advising you for your good."

"Suppose I don't want to be advised for my good. Eh? Hand me over that lemon. You needn't start a speech; I'm not going to eat it."

"Blest if he ain't rubbing his 'ands with it!" exclaimed Mellish, after watching him for some moments. "Why, you bloomin' fool, lemon won't 'arden your 'ands. Ain't I took enough trouble with them?"

"I want to whiten them," said Cashel, impatiently throwing the lemon under the grate; "but it's no use; I can't go about with my fists like a nigger's. I'll go up to London to-morrow and buy a pair of gloves."

"What! Real gloves? Wearin' gloves?"

"You thundering old lunatic," said Cashel, rising and putting on his hat; "is it likely that I want a pair of mufflers? Perhaps you think *you* could teach me something with them. Ha! ha! By-the-bye—now mind this, Mellish—don't let it out down here that I'm a fighting man. Do you hear?"

"Me let it out!" cried Mellish, indignantly. "Is it likely? Now, I asts you, Cashel Byron, is it likely?"

"Likely or not, don't do it," said Cashel. "You might get talking with some of the chaps about the castle stables. They are generous with their liquor when they can get sporting news for it."

Mellish looked at him reproachfully, and Cashel turned towards the door. This movement changed the trainer's sense of injury into anxiety. He renewed his remonstrances as to the folly of venturing into the night air, and cited many examples of pugilists who had suffered defeat in consequence of neglecting the counsel of their trainers. Cashel expressed his disbelief in these anecdotes in brief and personal terms; and at last Mellish had to content himself with proposing to limit the duration of the walk to half an hour.

"Perhaps I will come back in half an hour," said Cashel, "and perhaps I won't."

"Well, look here," said Mellish; "we won't quarrel about a minute or two; but I feel the want of a walk myself, and I'll come with you."

"I'm d——d if you shall," said Cashel. "Here, let me out; and shut up. I'm not going further than the park. I have no intention of making a night of it in the village, which is what you are afraid of. I know you, you old dodger. If you don't get out of my way I'll seat you on the fire."

"But duty, Cashel, duty," pleaded Mellish, persuasively. "Every man oughter do his duty. Consider your duty to your backers."

"Are you going to get out of my way, or must I put you out of it?" said Cashel, reddening ominously.

Mellish went back to his chair, bowed his head on his hands, and wept. "I'd sooner be a dog nor a trainer," he exclaimed. "Oh! the cussedness of bein' shut up for weeks with a fightin' man! For the fust two days they're as sweet as treacle; and then their contrairyness comes out. Their tempers is puffict 'ell."

Cashel, additionally enraged by a sting of remorse, went out and slammed the door. He made straight towards the castle, and watched its windows for nearly half an hour, keeping in constant motion so as to avert a chill. At last an exquisitely toned bell struck the hour from one of the minarets. To Cashel, accustomed to the coarse jangling of ordinary English bells, the sound seemed to belong to fairyland. He went slowly back to the Warren Lodge, and found his trainer standing at the open door, smoking, and anxiously awaiting his return. Cashel rebuffed certain conciliatory advances with a haughty reserve more dignified, but much less acceptable to Mr. Mellish, than his former profane familiarity, and went contemplatively to bed.

CHAPTER IV

One morning Miss Carew sat on the bank of a great pool in the park, throwing pebbles two by two into the water, and intently watching the intersection of the circles they made on its calm surface. Alice was seated on a camp-stool a little way off, sketching the castle, which appeared on an eminence to the south-east. The woodland rose round them like the sides of an amphitheatre; but the trees did not extend to the water's edge, where there was an ample margin of bright greensward and a narrow belt of gravel, from which Lydia was picking her pebbles.

Presently, hearing a footstep, she looked back, and saw Cashel Byron standing behind Alice, apparently much interested in her drawing. He was dressed as she had last seen him, except that he wore primrose gloves and an Egyptian red scarf. Alice turned, and surveyed him with haughty surprise; but he made nothing of her looks; and she, after glancing at Lydia to reassure herself that she was not alone, bade him good-morning, and resumed her work.

"Queer place," he remarked, after a pause, alluding to the castle. "Chinese looking, isn't it?"

"It is considered a very fine building," said Alice.

"Oh, hang what it is considered!" said Cashel. "What *is* it? That is the point to look to."

"It is a matter of taste," said Alice, very coldly.

"Mr. Cashel Byron."

Cashel started and hastened to the bank. "How d'ye do, Miss Carew," he said. "I didn't see you until you called me." She looked at him; and he, convicted of a foolish falsehood, quailed. "There is a splendid view of the castle from here," he continued, to change the subject. "Miss Goff and I have just been talking about it."

"Yes. Do you admire it?"

"Very much indeed. It is a beautiful place. Every one must acknowledge that."

"It is considered kind to praise my house to me, and to ridicule it to other people. You do not say, 'Hang what it is considered,' now."

Cashel, with an unaccustomed sense of getting the worst of an encounter, almost lost heart to reply. Then he brightened, and said, "I can tell you how that is. As far as being a place to sketch, or for another person to look at, it is Chinese enough. But somehow your living in it makes a difference. That is what I meant; upon my soul it is."

Lydia smiled; but he, looking down at her, did not see the smile because of her coronet of red hair, which seemed to flame in the sunlight. The obstruction was unsatisfactory to him; he wanted to see her face. He hesitated, and then sat down on the ground beside her cautiously, as if getting into a very hot bath.

"I hope you won't mind my sitting here," he said, timidly. "It seems rude to talk down at you from a height."

She shook her head and threw two more stones into the pool. He could think of nothing further to say, and as she did not speak, but gravely watched the circles in the water, he began to stare at them too; and they sat in silence for some minutes, steadfastly regarding the waves, she as if there were matter for infinite thought in them, and he as though the spectacle wholly confounded him. At last she said,

"Have you ever realized what a vibration is?"

"No," said Cashel, after a blank look at her.

"I am glad to hear you make that admission. Science has reduced everything nowadays to vibration. Light, sound, sensation—all the mysteries of nature are either vibrations or interference of vibrations. There," she said, throwing another pair of pebbles in, and pointing to the two sets of widening rings as they overlapped one another; "the twinkling of a star, and the pulsation in a chord of music, are *that*. But I cannot picture the thing in my own mind. I wonder whether the hundreds of writers of text-books on physics, who talk so glibly of vibrations, realize them any better than I do."

"Not a bit of it. Not one of them. Not half so well," said Cashel, cheerfully, replying to as much of her speech as he understood.

"Perhaps the subject does not interest you," she said, turning to him.

"On the contrary; I like it of all things," said he, boldly.

"I can hardly say so much for my own interest in it. I am told that you are a student, Mr. Cashel

Byron. What are your favorite studies?—or rather, since that is generally a hard question to answer, what are your pursuits?"

Alice listened.

Cashel looked doggedly at Lydia, and his color slowly deepened. "I am a professor," he said.

"A professor of what? I know I should ask of where; but that would only elicit the name of a college, which would convey no real information to me."

"I am a professor of science," said Cashel, in a low voice, looking down at his left fist, which he was balancing in the air before him, and stealthily hitting his bent knee as if it were another person's face.

"Physical or moral science?" persisted Lydia.

"Physical science," said Cashel. "But there's more moral science in it than people think."

"Yes," said Lydia, seriously. "Though I have no real knowledge of physics, I can appreciate the truth of that. Perhaps all the science that is not at bottom physical science is only pretentious nescience. I have read much of physics, and have often been tempted to learn something of them—to make the experiments with my own hands—to furnish a laboratory—to wield the scalpel even. For, to master science thoroughly, I believe one must take one's gloves off. Is that your opinion?"

Cashel looked hard at her. "You never spoke a truer word," he said. "But you can become a very respectable amateur by working with the gloves."

"I never should. The many who believe they are the wiser for reading accounts of experiments deceive themselves. It is as impossible to learn science from hearsay as to gain wisdom from proverbs. Ah, it is so easy to follow a line of argument, and so difficult to grasp the facts that underlie it! Our popular lecturers on physics present us with chains of deductions so highly polished that it is a luxury to let them slip from end to end through our fingers. But they leave nothing behind but a vague memory of the sensation they afforded. Excuse me for talking figuratively. I perceive that you affect the opposite—a reaction on your part, I suppose, against tall talk and fine writing. Pray, should I ever carry out my intention of setting to work in earnest at science, will you give me some lessons?"

"Well," said Cashel, with a covert grin, "I would rather you came to me than to another professor; but I don't think it would suit you. I should like to try my hand on your friend there. She's stronger and straighter than nine out of ten men."

"You set a high value on physical qualifications then. So do I."

"Only from a practical point of view, mind you," said Cashel, earnestly. "It isn't right to be always looking at men and women as you would at horses. If you want to back them in a race or in a fight, that's one thing; but if you want a friend or a sweetheart, that's another."

"Quite so," said Lydia, smiling. "You do not wish to commit yourself to any warmer feeling towards Miss Goff than a critical appreciation of her form and condition."

"Just that," said Cashel, satisfied. "*You* understand me, Miss Carew. There are some people that you might talk to all day, and they'd be no wiser at the end of it than they were at the beginning. You're not one of that sort."

"I wonder do we ever succeed really in communicating our thoughts to one another. A thought must take a new shape to fit itself into a strange mind. You, Mr. Professor, must have acquired special experience of the incommunicability of ideas in the course of your lectures and lessons."

Cashel looked uneasily at the water, and said in a lower voice, "Of course you may call me just whatever you like; but—if it's all the same to you—I wish you wouldn't call me professor."

"I have lived so much in countries where professors expect to be addressed by their titles on all occasions, that I may claim to be excused for having offended on that point. Thank you for telling me. But I am to blame for discussing science with you. Lord Worthington told us that you had come down here expressly to escape from it—to recruit yourself after an excess of work."

"It doesn't matter," said Cashel.

"I have not done harm enough to be greatly concerned; but I will not offend again. To change the subject, let us look at Miss Goff's sketch."

Miss Carew had hardly uttered this suggestion, when Cashel, in a business-like manner, and without the slightest air of gallantry, expertly lifted her and placed her on her feet. This unexpected attention gave her a shock, followed by a thrill that was not disagreeable. She turned to him with a faint mantling on her cheeks. He was looking with contracted brows at the sky, as though occupied with some calculation.

"Thank you," she said; "but pray do not do that again. It is a little humiliating to be lifted like a child. You are very strong."

"There is not much strength needed to lift such a feather-weight as you. Seven stone two, I should judge you to be, about. But there's a great art in doing these things properly. I have often had to carry off a man of fourteen stone, resting him all the time as if he was in bed."

"Ah," said Lydia; "I see you have had some hospital practice. I have often admired the skill with which trained nurses handle their patients."

Cashel made no reply, but, with a sinister grin, followed her to where Alice sat.

"It is very foolish of me, I know," said Alice, presently; "but I never can draw when any one is looking at me."

"You fancy that everybody is thinking about how you're doing it," said Cashel, encouragingly. "That's always the way with amateurs. But the truth is that not a soul except yourself is a bit concerned about it. *Ex*-cuse me," he added, taking up the drawing, and proceeding to examine it leisurely.

"Please give me my sketch, Mr. Byron," she said, her cheeks red with anger. Puzzled, he turned to Lydia for an explanation, while Alice seized the sketch and packed it in her portfolio.

"It is getting rather warm," said Lydia. "Shall we return to the castle?"

"I think we had better," said Alice, trembling with resentment as she walked away quickly, leaving Lydia alone with Cashel, who presently exclaimed,

"What in thunder have I done?"

"You have made an inconsiderate remark with unmistakable sincerity."

"I only tried to cheer her up. She must have mistaken what I said."

"I think not. Do you believe that young ladies like to be told that there is no occasion for them to be ridiculously self-conscious?"

"I say that! I'll take my oath I never said anything of the sort."

"You worded it differently. But you assured her that she need not object to have her drawing overlooked, as it is of no importance to any one."

"Well, if she takes offence at that she must be a born fool. Some people can't bear to be told anything. But they soon get all that thin-skinned nonsense knocked out of them."

"Have you any sisters, Mr. Cashel Byron?"

"No. Why?"

"Or a mother?"

"I have a mother; but I haven't seen her for years, and I don't much care if I never see her. It was through her that I came to be what I am."

"Are you then dissatisfied with your profession?"

"No—I don't mean that. I am always saying stupid things."

"Yes. That comes of your ignorance of a sex accustomed to have its silliness respected. You will find it hard to keep on good terms with my friend without some further study of womanly ways."

"As to her, I won't give in that I'm wrong unless I *am* wrong. The truth's the truth."

"Not even to please Miss Goff?"

"Not even to please you. You'd only think the worse of me afterwards."

"Quite true, and quite right," said Lydia, cordially. "Good-bye, Mr. Cashel Byron. I must rejoin Miss Goff."

"I suppose you will take her part if she keeps a down on me for what I said to her."

"What is 'a down'? A grudge?"

"Yes. Something of that sort."

"Colonial, is it not?" pursued Lydia, with the air of a philologist.

"Yes; I believe I picked it up in the colonies." Then he added, sullenly, "I suppose I shouldn't use slang in speaking to you. I beg your pardon."

"I do not object to it. On the contrary, it interests me. For example, I have just learned from it that you have been in Australia."

"So I have. But are you out with me because I annoyed Miss Goff?"

"By no means. Nevertheless, I sympathize with her annoyance at the manner, if not the matter, of your rebuke."

"I can't, for the life of me, see what there was in what I said to raise such a fuss about. I wish you would give me a nudge whenever you see me making a fool of myself. I will shut up at once and ask no questions."

"So that it will be understood that my nudge means 'Shut up, Mr. Cashel Byron; you are making a fool of yourself'?"

"Just so. *You* understand me. I told you that before, didn't I?"

"I am afraid," said Lydia, her face bright with laughter, "that I cannot take charge of your manners until we are a little better acquainted."

He seemed disappointed. Then his face clouded; and he began, "If you regard it as a liberty—"

"Of course I regard it as a liberty," she said, neatly interrupting him. "Is not my own conduct a sufficient charge upon my attention? Why should I voluntarily assume that of a strong man and learned professor as well?"

"By Jingo!" exclaimed Cashel, with sudden excitement, "I don't care what you say to me. You have a way of giving things a turn that makes it a pleasure to be shut up by you; and if I were a gentleman, as I ought to be, instead of a poor devil of a professional pug, I would—" He recollected himself, and turned quite pale. There was a pause.

"Let me remind you," said Lydia, composedly, though she too had changed color at the beginning of his outburst, "that we are both wanted elsewhere at present; I by Miss Goff, and you by your servant, who has been hovering about us and looking at you anxiously for some minutes."

Cashel turned fiercely, and saw Mellish standing a little way off, sulkily watching him. Lydia took the opportunity, and left the place. As she retreated she could hear that they were at high words together; but she could not distinguish what they were saying. Fortunately so; for their language was villainous.

She found Alice in the library, seated bolt upright in a chair that would have tempted a good-humored person to recline. Lydia sat down in silence. Alice, presently looking at her, discovered that she was in a fit of noiseless laughter. The effect, in contrast to her habitual self-possession, was so strange that Alice almost forgot to be offended.

"I am glad to see that it is not hard to amuse you," she said.

Lydia waited to recover herself thoroughly, and then replied, "I have not laughed so three times in my life. Now, Alice, put aside your resentment of our neighbor's impudence for the moment, and tell me what you think of him."

"I have not thought about him at all, I assure you," said Alice, disdainfully.

"Then think about him for a moment to oblige me, and let me know the result."

"Really, you have had much more opportunity of judging than I. *I* have hardly spoken to him."

Lydia rose patiently and went to the bookcase. "You have a cousin at one of the universities, have you not?" she said, seeking along the shelf for a volume.

"Yes," replied Alice, speaking very sweetly to atone for her want of amiability on the previous subject.

"Then perhaps you know something of university slang?"

"I never allow him to talk slang to me," said Alice, quickly.

"You may dictate modes of expression to a single man, perhaps, but not to a whole university," said Lydia, with a quiet scorn that brought unexpected tears to Alice's eyes. "Do you know what a pug is?"

"A pug!" said Alice, vacantly. "No; I have heard of a bulldog—a proctor's bulldog, but never a pug."

"I must try my slang dictionary," said Lydia, taking down a book and opening it. "Here it is. 'Pug—a fighting man's idea of the contracted word to be produced from pugilist.' What an extraordinary definition! A fighting man's idea of a contraction! Why should a man have a special idea of a contraction when he is fighting; or why should he think of such a thing at all under such circumstances? Perhaps 'fighting man' is slang too. No; it is not given here. Either I mistook the word, or it has some signification unknown to the compiler of my dictionary."

"It seems quite plain to me," said Alice. "Pug means pugilist."

"But pugilism is boxing; it is not a profession. I suppose all men are more or less pugilists. I want a sense of the word in which it denotes a calling or occupation of some kind. I fancy it means a demonstrator of anatomy. However, it does not matter."

"Where did you meet with it?"

"Mr. Byron used it just now."

"Do you really like that man?" said Alice, returning to the subject more humbly than she had quitted it.

"So far, I do not dislike him. He puzzles me. If the roughness of his manner is an affectation I have never seen one so successful before."

"Perhaps he does not know any better. His coarseness did not strike me as being affected at all."

"I should agree with you but for one or two remarks that fell from him. They showed an insight into the real nature of scientific knowledge, and an instinctive sense of the truths underlying words, which I have never met with except in men of considerable culture and experience. I suspect that his manner is deliberately assumed in protest against the selfish vanity which is the common source of social polish. It is partly natural, no doubt. He seems too impatient to choose his words heedfully. Do you ever go to the theatre?"

"No," said Alice, taken aback by this apparent irrelevance. "My father disapproved of it. But I was there once. I saw the 'Lady of Lyons.'"

"There is a famous actress, Adelaide Gisborne—"

"It was she whom I saw as the Lady of Lyons. She did it beautifully."

"Did Mr. Byron remind you of her?"

Alice stared incredulously at Lydia. "I do not think there can be two people in the world less like one another," she said.

"Nor do I," said Lydia, meditatively. "But I think their dissimilarity owes its emphasis to some lurking likeness. Otherwise how could he have reminded me of her?" Lydia, as she spoke, sat down with a troubled expression, as if trying to unravel her thoughts. "And yet," she added, presently, "my theatrical associations are so complex that—" A long silence ensued, during which Alice, conscious of some unusual stir in her patroness, watched her furtively and wondered what would happen next.

"Alice."

"Yes."

"My mind is exercising itself in spite of me on small and impertinent matters—a sure symptom of failing mental health. My presence here is only one of several attempts that I have made to live idly since my father's death. They have all failed. Work has become necessary to me. I will go to London tomorrow."

Alice looked up in dismay; for this seemed equivalent to a dismissal. But her face expressed nothing but polite indifference.

"We shall have time to run through all the follies of the season before June, when I hope to return here and set to work at a book I have planned. I must collect the material for it in London. If I leave town before the season is over, and you are unwilling to come away with me, I can easily find some one who will take care of you as long as you please to stay. I wish it were June already!"

Alice preferred Lydia's womanly impatience to her fatalistic calm. It relieved her sense of inferiority, which familiarity had increased rather than diminished. Yet she was beginning to persuade herself, with some success, that the propriety of Lydia's manners was at least questionable. That morning Miss Carew had not scrupled to ask a man what his profession was; and this, at least, Alice congratulated herself on being too well-bred to do. She had quite lost her awe of the servants, and had begun to address them with an unconscious haughtiness and a conscious politeness that were making the word "upstart" common in the servants' hall. Bashville, the footman, had risked his popularity there by opining that Miss Goff was a fine young woman.

Bashville was in his twenty-fourth year, and stood five feet ten in his stockings. At the sign of the Green Man in the village he was known as a fluent orator and keen political debater. In the stables he was deferred to as an authority on sporting affairs, and an expert wrestler in the Cornish fashion. The women servants regarded him with undissembled admiration. They vied with one another in inventing expressions of delight when he recited before them, which, as he had a good memory and was fond of poetry, he often did. They were proud to go out walking with him. But his attentions never gave rise to jealousy; for it was an open secret in the servants' hall that he loved his mistress. He had never said anything to that effect, and no one dared allude to it in his presence, much less rally him on his weakness; but his passion was well known for all that, and it seemed by no means so hopeless to the younger members of the domestic staff as it did to the cook, the butler, and Bashville himself. Miss Carew, who knew the value of good servants, appreciated her footman's smartness, and paid him accordingly; but she had no suspicion that she was waited on by a versatile young student of poetry and public affairs, distinguished for his gallantry, his personal prowess, his eloquence, and his influence on local politics.

It was Bashville who now entered the library with a salver, which he proffered to Alice, saying, "The gentleman is waiting in the round drawing-room, miss."

Alice took the gentleman's card, and read, "Mr. Wallace Parker."

"Oh!" she said, with vexation, glancing at Bashville as if to divine his impression of the visitor. "My cousin—the one we were speaking of just now—has come to see me."

"How fortunate!" said Lydia. "He will tell me the meaning of pug. Ask him to lunch with us."

"You would not care for him," said Alice. "He is not much used to society. I suppose I had better go and see him."

Miss Carew did not reply, being plainly at a loss to understand how there could be any doubt about the matter. Alice went to the round drawing-room, where she found Mr. Parker examining a trophy of Indian armor, and presenting a back view of a short gentleman in a spruce blue frock-coat. A new hat and pair of gloves were also visible as he stood looking upward with his hands behind him. When he turned to greet Alice he displayed a face expressive of resolute self-esteem, with eyes whose watery brightness, together with the bareness of his temples, from which the hair was worn away, suggested late hours and either very studious or very dissipated habits. He advanced confidently, pressed Alice's hand warmly for several seconds, and placed a chair for her, without noticing the marked coldness with which she received his attentions.

"I was surprised, Alice," he said, when he had seated himself opposite to her, "to learn from Aunt Emily that you had come to live here without consulting me. I—"

"Consult you!" she said, contemptuously, interrupting him. "I never heard of such a thing! Why should I consult you as to my movements?"

"Well, I should not have used the word consult, particularly to such an independent little lady as sweet Alice Goff. Still, I think you might—merely as a matter of form, you know—have informed me of the step you were taking. The relations that exist between us give me a right to your confidence."

"What relations, pray?"

"What relations!" he repeated, with reproachful emphasis.

"Yes. What relations?"

He rose, and addressed her with tender solemnity. "Alice," he began; "I have proposed to you at least six times—"

"And have I accepted you once?"

"Hear me to the end, Alice. I know that you have never explicitly accepted me; but it has always been understood that my needy circumstances were the only obstacle to our happiness. We—don't interrupt me, Alice; you little know what's coming. That obstacle no longer exists. I have been made second master at Sunbury College, with three hundred and fifty pounds a year, a house, coals, and gas. In the course of time I shall undoubtedly succeed to the head mastership—a splendid position, worth eight hundred pounds a year. You are now free from the troubles that have pressed so hard upon you since your father's death; and you can quit at once—now—instantly, your dependent position here."

"Thank you: I am very comfortable here. I am staying on a visit with Miss Carew."

Silence ensued; and he sat down slowly. Then she added, "I am exceedingly glad that you have got something good at last. It must be a great relief to your poor mother."

"I fancied, Alice—though it may have been only fancy—I fancied that *your* mother was colder than usual in her manner this morning. I hope that the luxuries of this palatial mansion are powerless to corrupt your heart. I cannot lead you to a castle and place crowds of liveried servants at your beck and call; but I can make you mistress of an honorable English home, independent of the bounty of strangers. You can never be more than a lady, Alice."

"It is very good of you to lecture me, I am sure."

"You might be serious with me," he said, rising in ill-humor, and walking a little way down the room.

"I think the offer of a man's hand ought to be received with respect."

"Oh! I did not quite understand. I thought we agreed that you are not to make me that offer every time we meet."

"It was equally understood that the subject was only deferred until I should be in a position to resume it without binding you to a long engagement. That time has come now; and I expect a favorable answer at last. I am entitled to one, considering how patiently I have waited for it."

"For my part, Wallace, I must say I do not think it wise for you to think of marrying with only three hundred and fifty pounds a year."

"With a house: remember that; and coals and gas! You are becoming very prudent, now that you live with Miss Whatshername here. I fear you no longer love me, Alice."

"I never said I loved you at any time."

"Pshaw! You never said so, perhaps; but you always gave me to understand that—"

"I did nothing of the sort, Wallace; and I won't have you say so."

"In short," he retorted, bitterly, "you think you will pick up some swell here who will be a better bargain than I am."

"Wallace! How dare you?"

"You hurt my feelings, Alice, and I speak out. I know how to behave myself quite as well as those who have the *entrée* here; but when my entire happiness is at stake I do not stand on punctilio. Therefore, I insist on a straightforward answer to my fair, honorable proposal."

"Wallace," said Alice, with dignity; "I will not be forced into giving an answer against my will. I regard you as a cousin."

"I do not wish to be regarded as a cousin. Have I ever regarded you as a cousin?"

"And do you suppose, Wallace, that I should permit you to call me by my Christian name, and be as familiar as we have always been together, if you were not my cousin? If so, you must have a very strange opinion of me."

"I did not think that luxury could so corrupt—"

"You said that before," said Alice, pettishly. "Do not keep repeating the same thing over and over; you know it is one of your bad habits. Will you stay to lunch? Miss Carew told me to ask you."

"Indeed! Miss Carew is very kind. Please inform her that I am deeply honored, and that I feel quite disturbed at being unable to accept her patronage."

Alice poised her head disdainfully. "No doubt it amuses you to make yourself ridiculous," she said; "but I must say I do not see any occasion for it."

"I am sorry that my behavior is not sufficiently good for you. You never found any cause to complain of it when our surroundings were less aristocratic. I am quite ashamed of taking so much of your valuable time. *Good*-morning."

"Good-morning. But I do not see why you are in such a rage."

"I am not in a rage. I am only grieved to find that you are corrupted by luxury. I thought your principles were higher. Good-morning, Miss Goff. I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you again in this very choice mansion."

"Are you really going, Wallace?" said Alice, rising.

"Yes. Why should I stay?"

She rang the bell, greatly disconcerting him; for he had expected her to detain him and make advances for a reconciliation. Before they could exchange more words, Bashville entered.

"Good-bye," said Alice, politely.

"Good-bye," he replied, through his teeth. He walked loftily out, passing Bashville with marked scorn.

He had left the house, and was descending the terrace steps, when he was overtaken by the footman, who said, civilly,

"Beg your pardon, sir. You've forgotten this, I think." And he handed him a walking-stick.

Parker's first idea was that his stick had attracted the man's attention by the poor figure it made in the castle hall, and that Bashville was requesting him, with covert superciliousness, to remove his property. On second thoughts, his self-esteem rejected this suspicion as too humiliating; but he resolved to show Bashville that he had a gentleman to deal with. So he took the stick, and instead of thanking Bashville, handed him five shillings.

Bashville smiled and shook his head. "Oh, no, sir," he said, "thank you all the same! Those are not my views."

"The more fool you," said Parker, pocketing the coins, and turning away.

Bashville's countenance changed. "Come, come, sir," he said, following Parker to the foot of the steps, "fair words deserve fair words. I am no more a fool than you are. A gentleman should know his place as well as a servant."

"Oh, go to the devil," muttered Parker, turning very red and hurrying away.

"If you weren't my mistress's guest," said Bashville, looking menacingly after him, "I'd send you to bed for a week for sending me to the devil."

CHAPTER V

MISS CAREW remorselessly carried out her intention of going to London, where she took a house in Regent's Park, to the disappointment of Alice, who had hoped to live in Mayfair, or at least in South Kensington. But Lydia set great store by the high northerly ground and open air of the park; and Alice found almost perfect happiness in driving through London in a fine carriage and fine clothes. She liked that better than concerts of classical music, which she did not particularly relish, or even than the opera, to which they went often. The theatres pleased her more, though the amusements there were tamer than she had expected. Society was delightful to her because it was real London society. She acquired a mania for dancing; went out every night, and seemed to herself far more distinguished and attractive than she had ever been in Wiltstoken, where she had nevertheless held a sufficiently favorable opinion of her own manners and person.

Lydia did not share all these dissipations. She easily procured invitations and chaperones for Alice, who wondered why so intelligent a woman would take the trouble to sit out a stupid concert, and then go home, just as the real pleasure of the evening was beginning.

One Saturday morning, at breakfast, Lydia said, "Your late hours begin to interfere with the freshness of your complexion, Alice. I am getting a little fatigued, myself, with literary work. I will go to the Crystal Palace to-day, and wander about the gardens for a while; there is to be a concert in the afternoon for the benefit of Madame Szczympliça, whose playing you do not admire. Will you come with me?"

"Of course," said Alice, resolutely dutiful.

"Of choice; not of course," said Lydia. "Are you engaged for to-morrow evening?"

"Sunday? Oh, no. Besides, I consider all my engagements subject to your convenience."

There was a pause, long enough for this assurance to fall perfectly flat. Alice bit her lip. Then Lydia said, "Do you know Mrs. Hoskyn?"

"Mrs. Hoskyn who gives Sunday evenings? Shall we go there?" said Alice, eagerly. "People often ask me whether I have been at one of them. But I don't know her—though I have seen her. Is she nice?"

"She is a young woman who has read a great deal of art criticism, and been deeply impressed by it. She has made her house famous by bringing there all the clever people she meets, and making them so comfortable that they take care to come again. But she has not, fortunately for her, allowed her craze for art to get the better of her common-sense. She married a prosperous man of business, who probably never read anything but a newspaper since he left school; and there is probably not a happier pair in England."

"I presume she had sense enough to know that she could not afford to choose," said Alice, complacently. "She is very ugly."

"Do you think so? She has many admirers, and was, I am told, engaged to Mr. Herbert, the artist, before she met Mr. Hoskyn. We shall meet Mr. Herbert there to-morrow, and a number of celebrated persons besides—his wife, Madame Szczympliça the pianiste, Owen Jack the composer, Hawkshaw the poet, Conolly the inventor, and others. The occasion will be a special one, as Herr Abendgasse, a remarkable German socialist and art critic, is to deliver a lecture on 'The True in Art.' Be careful, in speaking of him in society, to refer to him as a sociologist, and not as a socialist. Are you particularly anxious to hear him lecture?"

"No doubt it will be very interesting," said Alice. "I should not like to miss the opportunity of going to Mrs. Hoskyn's. People so often ask me whether I have been there, and whether I know this, that, and the other celebrated person, that I feel quite embarrassed by my rustic ignorance."

"Because," pursued Lydia, "I had intended not to go until after the lecture. Herr Abendgasse is enthusiastic and eloquent, but not original; and as I have imbibed all his ideas direct from their inventors, I do not feel called upon to listen to his exposition of them. So that, unless you are specially interested—"

"Not at all. If he is a socialist I should much rather not listen to him, particularly on Sunday evening."

So it was arranged that they should go to Mrs. Hoskyn's after the lecture. Meanwhile they went to Sydenham, where Alice went through the Crystal Palace with provincial curiosity, and Lydia answered her questions encyclopædically. In the afternoon there was a concert, at which a band played several long pieces of music, which Lydia seemed to enjoy, though she found fault with the performers. Alice, able to detect neither the faults in the execution nor the beauty of the music, did as she saw the others do—pretended to be pleased and applauded decorously. Madame Szczympliça, whom she expected to meet at Mrs. Hoskyn's, appeared, and played a fantasia for pianoforte and orchestra by the famous Jack, another of Mrs. Hoskyn's circle. There was in the programme an analysis of this composition from which Alice learned that by attentively listening to the *adagio* she could hear the angels singing therein. She listened as attentively as she could, but heard no angels, and was astonished when, at the conclusion of the fantasia, the audience applauded Madame Szczympliça as if she had made them hear the music of the spheres. Even Lydia seemed moved, and said,

"Strange, that she is only a woman like the rest of us, with just the same narrow bounds to her existence, and just the same prosaic cares—that she will go by train to Victoria, and from thence home in a common vehicle instead of embarking in a great shell and being drawn by swans to some enchanted island. Her playing reminds me of myself as I was when I believed in fairyland, and indeed knew little about any other land."

"They say," said Alice, "that her husband is very jealous, and that she leads him a terrible life."

"*They say* anything that brings gifted people to the level of their own experience. Doubtless they are right. I have not met Mr. Herbert, but I have seen his pictures, which suggest that he reads everything and sees nothing; for they all represent scenes described in some poem. If one could only find an educated man who had never read a book, what a delightful companion he would be!"

When the concert was over they did not return directly to town, as Lydia wished to walk awhile in the gardens. In consequence, when they left Sydenham, they got into a Waterloo train, and so had to change at Clapham Junction. It was a fine summer evening, and Alice, though she thought that it became ladies to hide themselves from the public in waiting-rooms at railway stations, did not attempt to dissuade Lydia from walking to and fro at an unfrequented end of the platform, which terminated in a bank covered with flowers.

"To my mind," said Lydia, "Clapham Junction is one of the prettiest places about London."

"Indeed!" said Alice, a little maliciously. "I thought that all artistic people looked on junctions and railway lines as blots on the landscape."

"Some of them do," said Lydia; "but they are not the artists of our generation; and those who take up their cry are no better than parrots. If every holiday recollection of my youth, every escape from town to country, be associated with the railway, I must feel towards it otherwise than did my father, upon whose middle age it came as a monstrous iron innovation. The locomotive is one of the wonders of modern childhood. Children crowd upon a bridge to see the train pass beneath. Little boys strut along the streets puffing and whistling in imitation of the engine. All that romance, silly as it looks, becomes sacred in after-life. Besides, when it is not underground in a foul London tunnel, a train is a beautiful thing. Its pure, white fleece of steam harmonizes with every variety of landscape. And its sound! Have you ever stood on a sea-coast skirted by a railway, and listened as the train came into hearing in the far distance? At first it can hardly be distinguished from the noise of the sea; then you recognize it by its vibration; one moment smothered in a deep cutting, and the next sent echoing from some hillside. Sometimes it runs smoothly for many minutes, and then breaks suddenly into a rhythmic clatter, always changing in distance and intensity. When it comes near, you should get into a tunnel, and stand there while it passes. I did that once, and it was like the last page of an overture by Beethoven—thunderingly impetuous. I cannot conceive how any person can hope to disparage a train by comparing it with a stage-coach; and I know something of stage-coaches—or, at least, of *diligences.* Their effect on the men employed about them ought to decide the superiority of steam without further argument. I have never observed an engine-driver who did not seem an exceptionally intelligent mechanic, while the very writers and artists who have preserved the memory of the coaching days for us do not appear to have taken coachmen seriously, or to have regarded them as responsible and civilized men. Abuse of the railway from a pastoral point of view is obsolete. There are millions of grown persons in England to whom the far sound of the train is as pleasantly suggestive as the piping of a blackbird. Again—is not that Lord Worthington getting out of the train? Yes, that one, at the third platform from this. He—" She stopped. Alice looked, but could see neither Lord Worthington nor the cause of a subtle but perceptible change in Lydia, who said, quickly,

"He is probably coming to our train. Come to the waiting-room." She walked swiftly along the platform as she spoke. Alice hurried after her; and they had but just got into the room, the door of which was close to the staircase which gave access to the platform, when a coarse din of men's voices showed that a noisy party were ascending the steps. Presently a man emerged reeling, and at once began to execute a drunken dance, and to sing as well as his condition and musical faculty allowed. Lydia stood near the window of the room and watched in silence. Alice, following her example, recognized the drunken dancer as Mellish. He was followed by three men gayly attired and highly elated, but comparatively sober. After them came Cashel Byron, showily dressed in a velveteen coat, and tightly-fitting fawn-colored pantaloons that displayed the muscles of his legs. He also seemed quite sober; but he was dishevelled, and his left eye blinked frequently, the adjacent brow and cheek being much yellower than his natural complexion, which appeared to advantage on the right side of his face. Walking steadily to Mellish, who was now asking each of the bystanders in turn to come and drink at his expense, he seized him by the collar and sternly bade him cease making a fool of himself. Mellish tried to embrace him.

"My own boy," he exclaimed, affectionately. "He's my little nonpareil. Cashel Byron again' the world at catch weight. Bob Mellish's money—"

"You sot," said Cashel, rolling him about until he was giddy as well as drunk, and then forcing him to sit down on a bench; "one would think you never saw a mill or won a bet in your life before."

"Steady, Byron," said one of the others. "Here's his lordship." Lord Worthington was coming up the stairs, apparently the most excited of the party.

"Fine man!" he cried, patting Cashel on the shoulder. "Splendid man! You have won a monkey for me to-day; and you shall have your share of it, old boy."

"I trained him," said Mellish, staggering forward again. "I trained him. You know me, my lord. You know Bob Mellish. A word with your lordship in c—confidence. You ask who knows how to make the beef go and the muscle come. You ask—I ask your lordship's pard'n. What'll your lordship take?"

"Take care, for Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Lord

Worthington, clutching at him as he reeled backward towards the line. "Don't you see the train?"

"*I* know," said Mellish, gravely. "I am all right; no man more so. I am Bob Mellish. You ask—"

"Here. Come out of this," said one of the party, a powerful man with a scarred face and crushed nose, grasping Mellish and thrusting him into the train. "Y'll 'ave to clap a beefsteak on that ogle of yours, where you napped the Dutchman's auctioneer, Byron. It's got more yellow paint on it than y'll like to show in church to-morrow."

At this they all gave a roar of laughter, and entered a third-class carriage. Lydia and Alice had but just time to take their places in the train before it started.

"Really, I must say," said Alice, "that if those were Mr. Cashel Byron's and Lord Worthington's associates, their tastes are very peculiar."

"Yes," said Lydia, almost grimly. "I am a fair linguist; but I did not understand a single sentence of their conversation, though I heard it all distinctly."

"They were not gentlemen," said Alice. "You say that no one can tell by a person's appearance whether he is a gentleman or not; but surely you cannot think that those men are Lord Worthington's equals."

"I do not," said Lydia. "They are ruffians; and Cashel Byron is the most unmistakable ruffian of them all."

Alice, awestruck, did not venture to speak again until they left the train at Victoria. There was a crowd outside the carriage in which Cashel had travelled. They hastened past; but Lydia asked a guard whether anything was the matter. He replied that a drunken man, alighting from the train, had fallen down upon the rails, and that, had the carriage been in motion, he would have been killed. Lydia thanked her informant, and, as she turned from him, found Bashville standing before her, touching his hat. She had given him no instructions to attend. However, she accepted his presence as a matter of course, and inquired whether the carriage was there.

"No, madam," replied Bashville. "The coachman had no orders."

"Quite right. A hansom, if you please." When he was gone she said to Alice, "Did you tell Bashville to meet us?"

"Oh, *dear*, no," said Alice. "I should not think of doing such a thing."

"Strange! However, he knows his duties better than I do; so I have no doubt that he has acted properly. He has been waiting all the afternoon, I suppose, poor fellow."

"He has nothing else to do," said Alice, carelessly. "Here he is. He has picked out a capital horse for us, too."

Meanwhile, Mellish had been dragged from beneath the train and seated on the knee of one of his companions. He was in a stupor, and had a large lump on his brow. His eye was almost closed. The man with the crushed nose now showed himself an expert surgeon. While Cashel supported the patient on the knee of another man, and the rest of the party kept off the crowd by mingled persuasion and violence, he produced a lancet and summarily reduced the swelling by lancing it. He then dressed the puncture neatly with appliances for that purpose which he carried about him, and shouted in Mellish's ear to rouse him. But the trainer only groaned, and let his head drop inert on his breast. More shouting was resorted to, but in vain. Cashel impatiently expressed an opinion that Mellish was shamming, and declared that he would not stand there to be fooled with all the evening.

"If he was my pal 'stead o' yours," said the man with the broken nose, "I'd wake him up fast enough."

"I'll save you the trouble," said Cashel, coolly stooping and seizing between his teeth the cartilage of the trainer's ear.

"That's the way to do it," said the other, approvingly, as Mellish screamed and started to his feet. "Now, then. Up with you."

He took Mellish's right arm, Cashel took the left, and they brought him away between them without paying the least heed to his tears, his protestations that he was hurt, his plea that he was an old man, or his bitter demand as to where Cashel would have been at that moment without his care.

Lord Worthington had taken advantage of this accident to slip away from his travelling companions and drive alone to his lodgings in Jermyn Street. He was still greatly excited; and when his valet, an old retainer with whom he was on familiar terms, brought him a letter that had arrived during his absence, he asked him four times whether any one had called, and four times interrupted him by scraps of information about the splendid day he had had and the luck he was in.

"I bet five hundred even that it would be over in a quarter of an hour; and then I bet Byron two hundred and fifty to one that it wouldn't. That's the way to do it; eh, Bedford? Catch Cashel letting two hundred and fifty slip through his fingers! By George, though, he's an artful card. At the end of fourteen minutes I thought my five hundred was corpsed. The Dutchman was full of fight; and Cashel suddenly turned weak and tried to back out of the rally. You should have seen the gleam in the Dutchman's eye when he rushed in after him. He made cock-sure of finishing him straight off."

"Indeed, my lord. Dear me!"

"I should think so: I was taken in by it myself. It was only done to draw the poor devil. By George, Bedford, you should have seen the way Cashel put in his right. But you couldn't have seen it; it was too quick. The Dutchman was asleep on the grass before he knew he'd been hit. Byron had collected fifteen pounds for him before he came to. His jaw must feel devilish queer after it. By Jove, Bedford, Cashel is a perfect wonder. I'd back him for every cent I possess against any man alive. He makes you feel proud of being an Englishman."

Bedford looked on with submissive wonder as his master, transfigured with enthusiasm, went hastily to and fro through the room, occasionally clinching his fist and smiting an imaginary Dutchman. The valet at last ventured to remind him that he had forgotten the letter.

"Oh, hang the letter!" said Lord Worthington. "It's Mrs. Hoskyn's writing—an invitation, or some such rot. Here; let's see it."

"Campden Hill Road, Saturday.

"My dear Lord Worthington,—I have not forgotten my promise to obtain for you a near view of the famous Mrs. Herbert—'Madame Simplicita,' as you call her. She will be with us to-morrow evening; and we shall be very happy to see you then, if you care to come. At nine o'clock, Herr Abendgasse, a celebrated German art critic and a great friend of mine, will read us a paper on 'The True in Art'; but I will not pay you the compliment of pretending to believe that that interests you, so you may come at ten or half-past, by which hour all the serious business of the evening will be over."

"Well, there is nothing like cheek," said Lord Worthington, breaking off in his perusal. "These women think that because I enjoy life in a rational way I don't know the back of a picture from the front, or the inside of a book from the cover. I shall go at nine sharp."

"If any of your acquaintances take an interest in art, I will gladly make them welcome. Could you not bring me a celebrity or two? I am very anxious to have as good an audience as possible for Herr Abendgasse. However, as it is, he shall have no reason to complain, as I flatter myself that I have already secured a very distinguished assembly. Still, if you can add a second illustrious name to my list, by all means do so."

"Very good, Mrs. Hoskyn," said Lord Worthington, looking cunningly at the bewildered Bedford. "You shall have a celebrity—a real one—none of your mouldy old Germans—if I can only get him to come. If any of her people don't like him they can tell him so. Eh, Bedford?"

CHAPTER VI

Next evening, Lydia and Alice reached Mrs. Hoskyn's house in Campden Hill Road a few minutes before ten o'clock. They found Lord Worthington in the front garden, smoking and chatting with Mr. Hoskyn. He threw away his cigar and returned to the house with the two ladies, who observed that he was somewhat flushed with wine. They went into a parlor to take off their wraps, leaving him at the foot of the stairs. Presently they heard some one come down and address him excitedly thus,

"Worthington. Worthington. He has begun making a speech before the whole room. He got up the moment old Abendgasse sat down. Why the deuce did you give him that glass of champagne?"

"Sh-sh-sh! You don't say so! Come with me; and let us try to get him away quietly."

"Did you hear that?" said Alice. "Something must have happened."

"I hope so," said Lydia. "Ordinarily, the fault in these receptions is that nothing happens. Do not announce us, if you please," she added to the servant, as they ascended the stairs. "Since we have come late, let us spare the feelings of Herr Abendgasse by going in as quietly as possible."

They had no difficulty in entering unnoticed, for

Mrs. Hoskyn considered obscurity beautiful; and her rooms were but dimly lighted by two curious lanterns of pink glass, within which were vaporous flames. In the middle of the larger apartment was a small table covered with garnet-colored plush, with a reading-desk upon it, and two candles in silver candlesticks, the light of which, being brighter than the lanterns, cast strong double shadows from a group of standing figures about the table. The surrounding space was crowded with chairs, occupied chiefly by ladies. Behind them, along the wall, stood a row of men, among whom was Lucian Webber. All were staring at Cashel Byron, who was making a speech to some bearded and spectacled gentlemen at the table. Lydia, who had never before seen him either in evening dress or quite at his ease, was astonished at his bearing. His eyes were sparkling, his confidence overbore the company, and his rough voice created the silence it broke. He was in high good-humor, and marked his periods by the swing of his extended left arm, while he held his right hand close to his body and occasionally pointed his remarks by slyly wagging his forefinger.

"—executive power," he was saying as Lydia entered. "That's a very good expression, gentlemen, and one that I can tell you a lot about. We have been told that if we want to civilize our neighbors we must do it mainly by the example of our own lives, by each becoming a living illustration of the highest culture we know. But what I ask is, how is anybody to know that you're an illustration of culture. You can't go about like a sandwich man with a label on your back to tell all the fine notions you have in your head; and you may be sure no person will consider your mere appearance preferable to his own. You want an executive power; that's what you want. Suppose you walked along the street and saw a man beating a woman, and setting a bad example to the roughs. Well, you would be bound to set a good example to them; and, if you're men, you'd like to save the woman; but you couldn't do it by merely living; for that would be setting the bad example of passing on and leaving the poor creature to be beaten. What is it that you need to know then, in order to act up to your fine ideas? Why, you want to know how to hit him, when to hit him, and where to hit him; and then you want the nerve to go in and do it. That's executive power; and that's what's wanted worse than sitting down and thinking how good you are, which is what this gentleman's teaching comes to after all. Don't you see? You want executive power to set an example. If you leave all that to the roughs, it's their example that will spread, and not yours. And look at the politics of it. We've heard a good deal about the French to-night. Well, they've got executive power. They know how to make a barricade, and how to fight behind it when they've made it. What's the result? Why, the French, if they only knew what they wanted, could have it to-morrow for the asking—more's the pity that they don't know. In this country we can do nothing; and if the lords and the landlords, or any other collection of nobs, were to drive us into the sea, what could we do but go? There's a gentleman laughing at me for saying that; but I ask him what would he do if the police or the soldiers came this evening and told him to turn out of his comfortable house into the Thames? Tell 'em he wouldn't vote for their employers at the next election, perhaps? Or, if that didn't stop them, tell 'em that he'd ask his friends to do the same? That's a pretty executive power! No, gentlemen. Don't let yourself be deceived by people that have staked their money against you. The first thing to learn is how to fight. There's no use in buying books and pictures unless you know how to keep them and your own head as well. If that gentleman that laughed knew how to fight, and his neighbors all knew how to fight too, he wouldn't need to fear police, nor soldiers, nor Russians, nor Prussians, nor any of the millions of men that may be let loose on him any day of the week, safe though he thinks himself. But, says you, let's have a division of labor. Let's not fight for ourselves, but pay other men to fight for us. That shows how some people, when they get hold of an idea, will work it to that foolish length that it's wearisome to listen to them. Fighting is the power of self-preservation; another man can't do it for you. You might as well divide the labor of eating your dinner, and pay one fellow to take the beef, another the beer, and a third the potatoes. But let us put it for the sake of argument that you do pay others to fight for you. Suppose some one else pays them higher, and they fight a cross, or turn openly against you! You'd have only yourself to blame for giving the executive power to money. And so long as the executive power is money the poor will be kept out of their corner and fouled against the ropes; whereas, by what I understand, the German professor wants them to have their rights. Therefore I say that a man's first duty is to learn to fight. If he can't do that he can't set an example; he can't stand up for his own rights or his neighbors'; he can't keep himself in bodily health; and if he sees the weak ill-used by the strong, the most he can do is to sneak away and tell the nearest policeman, who most likely won't turn up until the worst of the mischief is done. Coming to this lady's drawing-room, and making an illustration of himself, won't make him feel like a man after that. Let me be understood, though, gentlemen: I don't intend that you should take everything I say too exactly—too literally, as it were. If you see a man beating a woman, I think you should interfere on principle. But don't expect to be thanked by her for it; and keep your eye on her; don't let her get behind you. As for him, just give him a good one and go away. Never stay to get yourself into a street fight; for it's low, and generally turns out badly for all parties. However, that's only a bit of practical advice. It doesn't alter the great principle that you should get an executive power. When you get that, you'll have courage in you; and, what's more, your courage will be of some use to you. For though you may have courage by nature, still, if you haven't executive power as well, your courage will only lead you to stand up to be beaten by men that have both courage and executive power; and what good does that do you? People say that you're a game fellow; but they won't find the stakes for you unless you can win them. You'd far better put your game in your pocket, and throw up the sponge while you can see to do it.

"Now, on this subject of game, I've something to say that will ease the professor's mind on a point that he seemed anxious about. I am no musician; but I'll just show you how a man that understands one art understands every art. I made out from the gentleman's remarks that there is a man in the musical line named Wagner, who is what you might call a game sort of composer; and that the musical fancy, though they can't deny that his tunes are first-rate, and that, so to speak, he wins his fights, yet they try to make out that he wins them in an outlandish way, and that he has no real science. Now I tell the gentleman not to mind such talk. As I have just shown you, his game wouldn't be any use to him without science. He might have beaten a few second-raters with a rush while he was young; but he wouldn't have lasted out as he has done unless he was clever as well. You will find that those that run him down are either jealous, or they are old stagers that are not used to his style, and think that anything new must be bad. Just wait a bit, and, take my word for it, they'll turn right round and swear that his style isn't new at all, and that he stole it from some one they saw when they were ten years old. History shows us that that is the way of such fellows in all ages, as the gentleman said; and he gave you Beethoven as an example. But an example like that don't go home to you, because there isn't one man in a million that ever heard of Beethoven. Take a man that everybody has heard of—Jack Randall! The very same things were said of *him*. After that, you needn't go to musicians for an example. The truth is, that there are people in the world with that degree of envy and malice in them that they can't bear to allow a good man his merits; and when they have to admit that he can do one thing, they try to make out that there's something else he can't do. Come: I'll put it to you short and business-like. This German gentleman, who knows all about music, tells you that many pretend that this Wagner has game but no science. Well, I, though I know nothing about music, will bet you twenty-five pounds that there's others that allow him to be full of science, but say that he has no game, and that all he does comes from his head, and not from his heart. I will. I'll bet twenty-five pounds on it, and let the gentleman of the house be stakeholder, and the German gentleman referee. Eh? Well, I'm glad to see that there are no takers.

"Now we'll go to another little point that the gentleman forgot. He recommended you to *learn*—to make yourselves better and wiser from day to day. But he didn't tell you why it is that you won't learn, in spite of his advice. I suppose that, being a foreigner, he was afraid of hurting your feelings by talking too freely to you. But you're not so thin-skinned as to take offence at a little plain-speaking, I'll be bound; so I tell you straight out that the reason you won't learn is not that you don't want to be clever, or that you are lazier than many that have learned a great deal, but just because you'd like people to think that you know everything already—because you're ashamed to be seen going to school; and you calculate that if you only hold your tongue and look wise you'll get through life without your ignorance being found out. But where's the good of lies and pretence? What does it matter if you get laughed at by a cheeky brat or two for your awkward beginnings? What's the use of always thinking of how you're looking, when your sense might tell you that other people are thinking about their own looks and not about yours? A big boy doesn't look well on a lower form, certainly; but when he works his way up he'll be glad he began. I speak to you more particularly because you're Londoners; and Londoners beat all creation for thinking about themselevs. However, I don't go with the gentleman in everything he said. All this struggling and striving to make the world better is a great mistake; not because it isn't a good thing to improve the world if you know how to do it, but because striving and struggling is the worst way you could set about doing anything. It gives a man a bad style, and weakens him. It shows that he don't believe in himself much. When I heard the professor striving and struggling so earnestly to set you to work reforming this, that, and the other, I said to myself, 'He's got himself to persuade as well as his audience. That isn't the language of conviction.' Whose—"

"Really, sir," said Lucian Webber, who had made his way to the table, "I think, as you have now addressed us at considerable length, and as there are other persons present whose opinions probably excite as much curiosity as yours—" He was interrupted by a "Hear, hear," followed by "No, no," and "Go on," uttered in more subdued tones than are customary at public meetings, but with more animation than is usually displayed in drawing-rooms. Cashel, who had been for a moment somewhat put out, turned to Lucian and said, in a tone intended to repress, but at the same time humor his impatience, "Don't you be in a hurry, sir. You shall have your turn presently. Perhaps I may tell you something you don't know, before I stop." Then he turned again to the company, and resumed.

"We were talking about effort when this young gentleman took it upon himself to break the ring. Now, nothing can be what you might call artistically done if it's done with an effort. If a thing can't be done light and easy, steady and certain, let it not be done at all. Sounds strange, doesn't it? But I'll tell you a stranger thing. The more effort you make, the less effect you produce. A *would-be* artist is no artist at all. I see that in my own profession (never mind what that profession is just at present, as the ladies might think the worse of me for it). But in all professions, any work that shows signs of labor, straining, yearning—as the German gentleman said—or effort of any kind, is work beyond the man's strength that does it, and therefore not well done. Perhaps it's beyond his natural strength; but it is more likely that he was badly taught. Many teachers set their pupils on to strain and stretch, so that they get used up, body and mind, in a few months. Depend upon it, the same thing is true in other arts. I once taught a fiddler that used to get a hundred guineas for playing two or three tunes; and he told me that it was just the same thing with the fiddle—that when you laid a tight hold on your fiddle-stick, or even set your teeth hard together, you could do nothing but rasp like the fellows that play in bands for a few shillings a night."

"How much more of this nonsense must we endure?" said Lucian, audibly, as Cashel stopped for breath. Cashel turned and looked at him.

"By Jove!" whispered Lord Worthington to his companion, "that fellow had better be careful. I wish he would hold his tongue."

"You think it's nonsense, do you?" said Cashel, after a pause. Then he raised one of the candles, and illuminated a picture that hung on the wall. "Look at that picture," he said. "You see that fellow in armor—St. George and the dragon, or whatever he may be. He's jumped down from his horse to fight the other fellow—that one with his head in a big helmet, whose horse has tumbled. The lady in the gallery is half crazy with anxiety for St. George; and well she may be. *There's* a posture for a man to fight in! His weight isn't resting on his legs; one touch of a child's finger would upset him. Look at his neck craned out in front of him, and his face as flat as a full moon towards his man, as if he was inviting him to shut up both his eyes with one blow. You can all see that he's as weak and nervous as a cat, and that he doesn't know how to fight. And why does he give you that idea? Just because he's all strain and stretch; because he isn't at his ease; because he carries the weight of his body as foolishly as one of the ladies here would carry a hod of bricks; because he isn't safe, steady, and light on his pins, as he would be if he could forget himself for a minute, and leave his body to find its proper balance of its own accord. If the painter of that picture had known his business he would never have sent his man up to the scratch in such a figure and condition as that. But you can see with one eye that he didn't understand—I won't say the principles of fighting, but the universal principles that I've told you of, that ease and strength, effort and weakness, go together. Now," added Cashel, again addressing Lucian; "do you still think that notion of mine nonsense?" And he smacked his lips with satisfaction; for his criticism of the picture had produced a marked sensation, and he did not know that this was due to the fact that the painter, Mr. Adrian Herbert, was present.

Lucian tried to ignore the question; but he found it impossible to ignore the questioner. "Since you have set the example of expressing opinions without regard to considerations of common courtesy," he said, shortly, "I may say that your theory, if it can be called one, is manifestly absurd."

Cashel, apparently unruffled, but with more deliberation of manner than before, looked about him as if in search of a fresh illustration. His glance finally rested on the lecturer's seat, a capacious crimson damask arm-chair that stood unoccupied at some distance behind Lucian.

"I see you're no judge of a picture," said he, good-humoredly, putting down the candle, and stepping in front of Lucian, who regarded him haughtily, and did not budge. "But just look at it in this way. Suppose you wanted to hit me the most punishing blow you possibly could. What would you do? Why, according to your own notion, you'd make a great effort. 'The more effort the more force,' you'd say to yourself. 'I'll smash him even if I burst myself in doing it.' And what would happen then? You'd only cut me and make me angry, besides exhausting all your strength at one gasp. Whereas, if you took it easy—like this—" Here he made a light step forward and placed his open palm gently against the breast of Lucian, who instantly reeled back as if the piston-rod of a steam-engine had touched him, and dropped into the chair.

"There!" exclaimed Cashel, standing aside and pointing to him. "It's like pocketing a billiard-ball!"

A chatter of surprise, amusement, and remonstrance spread through the rooms; and the company crowded towards the table. Lucian rose, white with rage, and for a moment entirely lost his self-control. Fortunately, the effect was to paralyze him; he neither moved nor spoke, and only betrayed his condition by his pallor and the hatred in his expression. Presently he felt a touch on his arm and heard his name pronounced by Lydia. Her voice calmed him. He tried to look at her, but his vision was disturbed; he saw double; the lights seemed to dance before his eyes; and Lord Worthington's voice, saying to Cashel, "Rather too practical, old fellow," seemed to come from a remote corner of the room, and yet to be whispered into his ear. He was moving irresolutely in search of Lydia when his senses and his resentment were restored by a clap on the shoulder.

"You wouldn't have believed that now, would you?" said Cashel. "Don't look startled; you've no bones broken. You had your little joke with me in your own way; and I had mine in *my* own way. That's only—"

He stopped; his brave bearing vanished; he became limp and shamefaced. Lucian, without a word, withdrew with Lydia to the adjoining apartment, and left him staring after her with wistful eyes and slackened jaw.

In the meantime Mrs. Hoskyn, an earnest-looking young woman, with striking dark features and gold spectacles, was looking for Lord Worthington, who betrayed a consciousness of guilt by attempting to avoid her. But she cut off his retreat, and confronted him with a steadfast gaze that compelled him to stand and answer for himself.

"Who is that gentleman whom you introduced to me? I do not recollect his name."

"I am really awfully sorry, Mrs. Hoskyn. It was too bad of Byron. But Webber was excessively nasty."

Mrs. Hoskyn, additionally annoyed by apologies which she had not invited, and which put her in the ignominious position of a complainant, replied coldly, "Mr. Byron! Thank you; I had forgotten," and was turning away when Lydia came up to introduce Alice, and to explain why she had entered unannounced. Lord Worthington then returned to the subject of Cashel, hoping to improve his credit by claiming Lydia's acquaintance with him.

"Did you hear our friend Byron's speech, Miss Carew? Very characteristic, I thought."

"Very," said Lydia. "I hope Mrs. Hoskyn's guests are all familiar with his style. Otherwise they must find him a little startling."

"Yes," said Mrs. Hoskyn, beginning to wonder whether Cashel could be some well-known eccentric genius. "He is very odd. I hope Mr. Webber is not offended."

"He is the less pleased as he was in the wrong," said Lydia. "Intolerant refusal to listen to an opponent is a species of violence that has no business in such a representative nineteenth-century drawing-room as yours, Mrs. Hoskyn. There was a fitness in rebuking it by skilled physical violence. Consider the prodigious tact of it, too! One gentleman knocks another half-way across a crowded room, and yet no one is scandalized."

"You see, Mrs. Hoskyn, the general verdict is 'Served him right,'" said Lord Worthington.

"With a rider to the effect that both gentlemen displayed complete indifference to the comfort of their hostess," said Lydia. "However, men so rarely sacrifice their manners to their minds that it would be a pity to blame them. You do not encourage conventionality, Mrs. Hoskyn?"

"I encourage good manners, though certainly not conventional manners."

"And you think there is a difference?"

"I *feel* that there is a difference," said Mrs. Hoskyn, with dignity.

"So do I," said Lydia; "but one can hardly call others to account for one's own subjective ideas."

Lydia went away to another part of the room without waiting for a reply. Meanwhile, Cashel stood friendless in the middle of the room, stared at by most of his neighbors, and spoken to by none. Women looked at him coldly lest it should be suspected that they were admiring him; and men regarded him stiffly according to the national custom. Since his recognition of Lydia, his self-confidence had given place to a misgiving that he had been making a fool of himself. He began to feel lonely and abashed; and but for his professional habit of maintaining a cheerful countenance under adverse circumstances, he would have hid himself in the darkest corner of the room. He was getting sullen, and seeking consolation in thoughts of how terribly he could handle all these distantly-mannered, black-coated gentlemen if he chose, when Lord Worthington came up to him.

"I had no idea you were such an orator, Byron," he said. "You can go into the Church when you cut the other trade. Eh?"

"I wasn't brought up to the other trade," said

Cashel; "and I know how to talk to ladies and gentlemen as well as to what you'd suppose to be my own sort. Don't you be anxious about me, my lord. I know how to make myself at home."

"Of course, of course," said Lord Worthington, soothingly. "Every one can see by your manners that you are a gentleman; they recognize that even in the ring. Otherwise—I know you will excuse my saying so—I daren't have brought you here."

Cashel shook his head, but was pleased. He thought he hated flattery; had Lord Worthington told him that he was the best boxer in England—which he probably was—he would have despised him. But he wished to believe the false compliment to his manners, and was therefore perfectly convinced of its sincerity. Lord Worthington perceived this, and retired, pleased with his own tact, in search of Mrs. Hoskyn, to claim her promise of an introduction to Madame Szczympliça, which Mrs. Hoskyn had, by way of punishing him for Cashel's misdemeanor, privately determined not to redeem.

Cashel began to think he had better go. Lydia was surrounded by men who were speaking to her in German. He felt his own inability to talk learnedly even in English; and he had, besides, a conviction that she was angry with him for upsetting her cousin, who was gravely conversing with Miss Goff. Suddenly a horrible noise caused a general start and pause. Mr. Jack, the eminent composer, had opened the pianoforte, and was illustrating some points in a musical composition under discussion by making discordant sounds with his voice, accompanied by a few chords. Cashel laughed aloud in derision as he made his way towards the door through the crowd, which was now pressing round the pianoforte at which Madame Szczympliça had just come to the assistance of Jack. Near the door, and in a corner remote from the instrument, he came upon Lydia and a middle-aged gentleman, evidently neither a professor nor an artist.

"Ab'n'gas is a very clever man," the gentleman was saying. "I am sorry I didn't hear the lecture. But I leave all that to Mary. She receives the people who enjoy high art up-stairs; and I take the sensible men down to the garden or the smoking-room, according to the weather."

"What do the sensible women do?" said Lydia.

"They come late," said Mr. Hoskyn, and then laughed at his repartee until he became aware of the vicinity of Cashel, whose health he immediately inquired after, shaking his hand warmly and receiving a numbing grip in return. As soon as he saw that Lydia and Cashel were acquainted, he slipped away and left them to entertain one another.

"I wonder how he knows me," said Cashel, heartened by her gracious reception of a nervous bow. "I never saw him before in my life."

"He does not know you," said Lydia, with some sternness. "He is your host, and therefore concludes that he ought to know you."

"Oh! That was it, was it?" He paused, at a loss for conversation. She did not help him. At last he added, "I haven't seen you this long time, Miss Carew."

"It is not very long since I saw you, Mr. Cashel Byron. I saw you yesterday at some distance from London."

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Cashel, "don't say that. You're joking, ain't you?"

"No. Joking, in that sense, does not amuse me."

Cashel looked at her in consternation. "You don't mean to say that you went to see a—a— Where—when did you see me? You might tell me."

"Certainly. It was at Clapham Junction, at a quarter-past six."

"Was any one with me?"

"Your friend, Mr. Mellish, Lord Worthington, and some other persons."

"Yes. Lord Worthington was there. But where were you?"

"In a waiting-room, close to you."

"I never saw you," said Cashel, growing red as he recalled the scene. "We must have looked very queer. I had had an accident to my eye, and Mellish was not sober. Did you think I was in bad company?"

"That was not my business, Mr. Cashel Byron."

"No," said Cashel, with sudden bitterness. "What did *you* care what company I kept? You're mad with me because I made your cousin look like a fool, I suppose. That's what's the matter."

Lydia looked around to see that no one was within earshot, and, speaking in a low tone to remind him that they were not alone, said, "There is nothing the matter, except that you are a grown-up boy rather than a man. I am not mad with you because of your attack upon my cousin; but he is very much annoyed, and so is Mrs. Hoskyn, whose guest you were bound to respect."

"I knew you'd be down on me. I wouldn't have said a word if I'd known that you were here," said Cashel, dejectedly. "Lie down and be walked over; that's what you think I'm fit for. Another man would have twisted his head off."

"Is it possible that you do not know that gentlemen never twist one another's heads off in society, no matter how great may be the provocation?"

"I know nothing," said Cashel with plaintive sullenness. "Everything I do is wrong. There. Will that satisfy you?"

Lydia looked up at him in doubt. Then, with steady patience, she added: "Will you answer me a question on your honor?"

He hesitated, fearing that she was going to ask what he was.

"The question is this," she said, observing the hesitation. "Are you a simpleton, or a man of science pretending to be a simpleton for the sake of mocking me and my friends?"

"I am not mocking you; honor bright! All that about science was only a joke—at least, it's not what you call science. I'm a real simpleton in drawing-room affairs; though I'm clever enough in my own line."

"Then try to believe that I take no pleasure in making you confess yourself in the wrong, and that you cannot have a lower opinion of me than the contrary belief implies."

"That's just where you're mistaken," said Cashel, obstinately. "I haven't got a low opinion of you at all. There's such a thing as being too clever."

"You may not know that it is a low opinion. Nevertheless, it is so."

"Well, have it your own way. I'm wrong again; and you're right."

"So far from being gratified by that, I had rather that we were both in the right and agreed. Can you understand that?"

"I can't say I do. But I give in to it. What more need you care for?"

"I had rather you understood. Let me try to explain. You think that I like to be cleverer than other people. You are mistaken. I should like them all to know whatever I know."

Cashel laughed cunningly, and shook his head. "Don't you make any mistake about that," he said. "You don't want anybody to be quite as clever as yourself; it isn't in human nature that you should. You'd like people to be just clever enough to show you off—to be worth beating. But you wouldn't like them to be able to beat you. Just clever enough to know how much cleverer you are; that's about the mark. Eh?"

Lydia made no further effort to enlighten him. She looked at him thoughtfully, and said, slowly, "I begin to hold the clew to your idiosyncrasy. You have attached yourself to the modern doctrine of a struggle for existence, and look on life as a perpetual combat."

"A fight? Just so. What is life but a fight? The curs forfeit or get beaten; the rogues sell the fight and lose the confidence of their backers; the game ones and the clever ones win the stakes, and have to hand over the lion's share of them to the loafers; and luck plays the devil with them all in turn. That's not the way they describe life in books; but that's what it is."

"Oddly put, but perhaps true. Still, is there any need of a struggle? Is not the world large enough for us all to live peacefully in?"

"*You* may think so, because you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth. But if you hadn't to fight for that silver spoon, some one else had; and no doubt he thought it hard that it should be taken away from him and given to you. I was a snob myself once, and thought the world was made for me to enjoy myself and order about the poor fellows whose bread I was eating. But I was left one day where I couldn't grab any more of their bread, and had to make some for myself—ay, and some extra for loafers that had the power to make me pay for what they didn't own. That took the conceit out of me fast enough. But what do you know about such things?"

"More than you think, perhaps. These are dangerous ideas to take with you into English society."

"Hmf!" growled Cashel. "They'd be more dangerous if I could give every man that is robbed of half what he earns twelve lessons—in science."

"So you can. Publish your lessons. 'Twelve lectures on political economy, by Cashel Byron.' I will help you to publish them, if you wish."

"Bless your innocence!" said Cashel: "the sort of political economy I teach can't be learned from a book."

"You have become an enigma again. But yours is not the creed of a simpleton. You are playing with me—revealing your wisdom from beneath a veil of infantile guilelessness. I have no more to say."

"May I be shot if I understand you! I never pretended to be guileless. Come: is it because I raised a laugh against your cousin that you're so spiteful?"

Lydia looked earnestly and doubtfully at him; and he instinctively put his head back, as if it were in danger. "You do not understand, then?" she said. "I will test the genuineness of your stupidity by an appeal to your obedience."

"Stupidity! Go on."

"But will you obey me, if I lay a command upon you?"

"I will go through fire and water for you."

Lydia blushed faintly, and paused to wonder at the novel sensation before she resumed. "You had better not apologize to my cousin: partly because you would only make matters worse; chiefly because he does not deserve it. But you must make this speech to Mrs. Hoskyn when you are going: 'I am very sorry I forgot myself'—"

"Sounds like Shakespeare, doesn't it?" observed Cashel.

"Ah! the test has found you out; you are only acting after all. But that does not alter my opinion that you should apologize."

"All right. I don't know what you mean by testing and acting; and I only hope you know yourself. But no matter; I'll apologize; a man like me can afford to. I'll apologize to your cousin, too, if you like."

"I do not like. But what has that to do with it? I suggest these things, as you must be aware, for your own sake and not for mine."

"As for my own, I don't care twopence: I do it all for you. I don't even ask whether there is anything between you and him."

"Would you like to know?" said Lydia, deliberately, after a pause of astonishment.

"Do you mean to say you'll tell me?" he exclaimed. "If you do, I'll say you're as good as gold."

"Certainly I will tell you. There is an old friendship and cousinship between us; but we are not engaged, nor at all likely to be. I tell you so because, if I avoided the question, you would draw the opposite and false conclusion."

"I am glad of it," said Cashel, unexpectedly becoming very gloomy. "He isn't man enough for you. But he's your equal, damn him!"

"He is my cousin, and, I believe, my sincere friend. Therefore please do not damn him."

"I know I shouldn't have said that. But I am only damning my own luck."

"Which will not improve it in the least."

"I know that. You needn't have said it. I wouldn't have said a thing like that to you, stupid as I am."

"Evidently you suppose me to have meant more than I really did. However, that does not matter. You are still an enigma to me. Had we not better try to hear a little of Madame Szczympliça's performance?"

"I'm a pretty plain enigma, I should think," said Cashel, mournfully. "I would rather have you than any other woman in the world; but you're too rich and grand for me. If I can't have the satisfaction of marrying you, I may as well have the satisfaction of saying I'd like to."

"Hardly a fair way of approaching the subject," said Lydia, composedly, but with a play of color again in her cheeks. "Allow me to forbid it unconditionally. I must be plain with you, Mr. Cashel Byron. I do not know what you are or who you are; and I believe you have tried to mystify me on both points—"

"And you never shall find out either the one or the other, if I can help it," put in Cashel; "so that we're in a preciously bad way of coming to a good understanding."

"True," assented Lydia. "I do not make secrets; I do not keep them; and I do not respect them. Your humor clashes with my principle."

"You call it a humor!" said Cashel, angrily. "Perhaps you think I am a duke in disguise. If so, you may think better of it. If you had a secret, the discovery of which would cause you to be kicked out of decent society, you would keep it pretty tight. And that through no fault of your own, mind you; but through downright cowardice and prejudice in other people."

"There are at least some fears and prejudices common in society that I do not share," said Lydia, after a moment's reflection. "Should I ever find out your secret, do not too hastily conclude that you have forfeited my consideration."

"You are just the last person on earth by whom I want to be found out. But you'll find out fast enough. Pshaw!" cried Cashel, with a laugh, "I'm as well known as Trafalgar Square. But I can't bring myself to tell you; and I hate secrets as much as you do; so let's drop it and talk about something else."

"We have talked long enough. The music is over, and the people will return to this room presently, perhaps to ask me who and what is the stranger who made them such a remarkable speech."

"Just a word. Promise me that you won't ask any of *them* that."

"Promise you! No. I cannot promise that."

"Oh, Lord!" said Cashel, with a groan.

"I have told you that I do not respect secrets. For the present I will not ask; but I may change my mind. Meanwhile we must not hold long conversations. I even hope that we shall not meet. There is only one thing that I am too rich and grand for. That one thing—mystification. Adieu."

Before he could reply she was away from him in the midst of a number of gentlemen, and in conversation with one of them. Cashel seemed overwhelmed. But in an instant he recovered himself, and stepped jauntily before Mrs. Hoskyn, who had just come into his neighborhood.

"I'm going, ma'am," he said. "Thank you for a pleasant evening. I'm very sorry I forgot myself. Good-night."

Mrs. Hoskyn, naturally frank, felt some vague response within herself to this address. But, though not usually at a loss for words in social emergencies, she only looked at him, blushed slightly, and offered her hand. He took it as if it were a tiny baby's hand and he afraid of hurting it, gave it a little pinch, and turned to go. Mr. Adrian Herbert, the painter, was directly in his way, with his back towards him.

"If *you* please, sir," said Cashel, taking him gently by the ribs, and moving him aside. The artist turned indignantly, but Cashel was passing the doorway. On the stairs he met Lucian and Alice, and stopped a moment to take leave of them.

"Good-night, Miss Goff," he said. "It's a pleasure to see the country roses in your cheeks." He lowered his voice as he added, to Lucian, "Don't you worry yourself over that little trick I showed you. If any of your friends chaff you about it, tell them that it was Cashel Byron did it, and ask them whether they think they could have helped themselves any better than you could. Don't ever let a person come within distance of you while you're standing in that silly way on both your heels. Why, if a man isn't properly planted on his pins, a broom-handle falling against him will upset him. That's the way of it. Goodnight."

Lucian returned the salutation, mastered by a certain latent dangerousness in Cashel, suggestive that he might resent a snub by throwing the offender over the balustrade. As for Alice, she had entertained a superstitious dread of him ever since Lydia had pronounced him a ruffian. Both felt relieved when the house door, closing, shut them out of his reach.

CHAPTER VII

Society was much occupied during Alice's first season in London with the upshot of an historical event of a common kind. England, a few years before, had stolen a kingdom from a considerable people in Africa, and seized the person of its king. The conquest proved useless, troublesome, and expensive; and after repeated attempts to settle the country on impracticable plans suggested to the Colonial Office by a popular historian who had made a trip to Africa, and by generals who were tired of the primitive remedy of killing the natives, it appeared that the best course was to release the captive king and get rid of the unprofitable booty by restoring it to him. In order, however, that the impression made on him by England's short-sighted disregard of her neighbor's landmark abroad might be counteracted by a glimpse of the vastness of her armaments and wealth at home, it was thought advisable to take him first to London, and show him the wonders of the town. But when the king arrived, his freedom from English prepossessions made it difficult to amuse, or even to impress him. A stranger to the idea that a private man could own a portion of the earth and make others pay him for permission to live on it, he was unable to understand why such a prodigiously wealthy nation should be composed partly of poor and uncomfortable persons toiling incessantly to create riches, and partly of a class that confiscated and dissipated the wealth thus produced without seeming to be at all happier than the unfortunate laborers at whose expense they existed. He was seized with strange fears, first for his health, for it seemed to him that the air of London, filthy with smoke, engendered puniness and dishonesty in those who breathed it; and eventually for his life, when he learned that kings in Europe were sometimes shot at by passers-by, there being hardly a monarch there who had not been so imperilled more than once; that the Queen of England, though accounted the safest of all, was accustomed to this variety of pistol practice; and that the autocrat of an empire huge beyond all other European countries, whose father had been torn asunder in the streets of his capital, lived surrounded by soldiers who shot down all strangers that approached him even at his own summons, and was an object of compassion to the humblest of his servants. Under these circumstances, the African king was with difficulty induced to stir out of doors; and he only visited Woolwich Arsenal—the destructive resources of which were expected to influence his future behavior in a manner favorable to English supremacy—under compulsion. At last the Colonial Office, which had charge of him, was at its wit's end to devise entertainments to keep him in good-humor until the appointed time for his departure.

On the Tuesday following Mrs. Hoskyn's reception, Lucian Webber called at his cousin's house in Regent's

Park, and said, in the course of a conversation with the two ladies there,

"The Colonial Office has had an idea. The king, it appears, is something of an athlete, and is curious to witness what Londoners can do in that way. So a grand assault-at-arms is to be held for him."

"What is an assault-at-arms?" said Lydia. "I have never been at one; and the name suggests nothing but an affray with bayonets."

"It is an exhibition of swordsmanship, military drill, gymnastics, and so forth."

"I will go to that," said Lydia. "Will you come, Alice?"

"Is it usual for ladies to go to such exhibitions?" said Alice, cautiously.

"On this occasion ladies will go for the sake of seeing the king," said Lucian. "The Olympian gymnastic society, which has undertaken the direction of the part of the assault that is to show off the prowess of our civilians, expects what they call a flower-show audience."

"Will you come, Lucian?"

"If I can be spared, yes. If not, I will ask Worthington to go with you. He understands such matters better than I."

"Then let us have him, by all means," said Lydia.

"I cannot see why you are so fond of Lord Worthington," said Alice. "His manners are good; but there is nothing in him. Besides, he is so young. I cannot endure his conversation. He has begun to talk about Goodwood already."

"He will grow out of his excessive addiction to sport," said Lucian.

"Indeed," said Lydia. "And what will he grow into?"

"Possibly into a more reasonable man," said Lucian, gravely.

"I hope so," said Lydia; "but I prefer a man who is interested in sport to a gentleman who is interested in nothing."

"Much might indubitably be said from that point of view. But it is not necessary that Lord Worthington should waste his energy on horse-racing. I presume you do not think political life, for which his position peculiarly fits him, unworthy his attention."

"Party tactics are both exciting and amusing, no doubt. But are they better than horse-racing? Jockeys and horse-breakers at least know their business; our legislators do not. Is it pleasant to sit on a bench—even though it be the treasury bench—and listen to either absolute nonsense or childish disputes about conclusions that were foregone in the minds of all sensible men a hundred years ago?"

"You do not understand the duties of a government, Lydia. You never approach the subject without confirming my opinion that women are constitutionally incapable of comprehending it."

"It is natural for you to think so, Lucian. The House of Commons is to you the goal of existence. To me it is only an assemblage of ill-informed gentlemen who have botched every business they have ever undertaken, from the first committee of supply down to the last land act; and who arrogantly assert that I am not good enough to sit with them."

"Lydia," said Lucian, annoyed; "you know that I respect women in their own sphere—"

"Then give them another sphere, and perhaps they will earn your respect in that also. I am sorry to say that men, in *their* sphere, have not won my respect. Enough of that for the present. I have to make some domestic arrangements, which are of more immediate importance than the conversion of a good politician into a bad philosopher. Excuse me for five minutes."

She left the room. Lucian sat down and gave his attention to Alice, who had still enough of her old nervousness to make her straighten her shoulders and look stately. But he did not object to this; a little stiffness of manner gratified his taste.

"I hope," he said, "that my cousin has not succeeded in inducing you to adopt her peculiar views."

"No," said Alice. "Of course her case is quite exceptional—she is so wonderfully accomplished. In general, I do not think women should have views. There are certain convictions which every lady holds: for instance, we know that Roman Catholicism is wrong. But that can hardly be called a view; indeed it would be wicked to call it so, as it is one of the highest truths. What I mean is that women should not be political agitators."

"I understand, and quite agree with you. Lydia is, as you say, an exceptional case. She has lived much abroad; and her father was a very singular man. Even the clearest heads, when removed from the direct influence of English life and thought, contract extraordinary prejudices. Her father at one time actually attempted to leave a large farm to the government in trust for the people; but fortunately he found that it was impossible; no such demise was known to the English law or practicable by it. He subsequently admitted the folly of this by securing Lydia's rights as his successor as stringently as he could. It is almost a pity that such strength of mind and extent of knowledge should be fortified by the dangerous independence which great wealth confers. Advantages like these bring with them certain duties to the class that has produced them—duties to which Lydia is not merely indifferent, but absolutely hostile."

"I never meddle with her ideas on—on these subjects. I am too ignorant to understand them. But Miss Carew's generosity to me has been unparalleled. And she does not seem to know that she is generous. I owe more to her than I ever can repay. At least," Alice added, to herself, "I am not ungrateful."

Miss Carew now reappeared, dressed in a long, gray coat and plain beaver hat, and carrying a roll of writing materials.

"I am going to the British Museum to read," said she.

"To walk!—alone!" said Lucian, looking at her costume.

"Yes. Prevent me from walking, and you deprive me of my health. Prevent me from going alone where I please and when I please, and you deprive me of my liberty—tear up Magna Charta, in effect. But I do not insist upon being alone in this instance. If you can return to your office by way of Regent's Park and Gower Street without losing too much time, I shall be glad of your company."

Lucian decorously suppressed his eagerness to comply by looking at his watch and pretending to consider his engagements. In conclusion, he said that he should be happy to accompany her.

It was a fine summer afternoon, and there were many people in the park. Lucian was soon incommoded by the attention his cousin attracted. In spite of the black beaver, her hair shone like fire in the sun. Women stared at her with unsympathetic curiosity, and turned as they passed to examine her attire. Men resorted to various subterfuges to get a satisfactory look without rudely betraying their intention. A few stupid youths gaped; and a few impudent ones smiled. Lucian would gladly have kicked them all, without distinction. He at last suggested that they should leave the path, and make a short cut across the greensward. As they emerged from the shade of the trees he had a vague impression that the fineness of the weather and the beauty of the park made the occasion romantic, and that the words by which he hoped to make the relation between him and his cousin dearer and closer would be well spoken there. But he immediately began to talk, in spite of himself, about the cost of maintaining the public parks, of the particulars of which he happened to have some official knowledge. Lydia, readily interested by facts of any sort, thought the subject not a bad one for a casual afternoon conversation, and pursued it until they left the turf and got into the Euston Road, where the bustle of traffic silenced them for a while. When they escaped from the din into the respectable quietude of Gower Street, he suddenly said,

"It is one of the evils of great wealth in the hands of a woman, that she can hardly feel sure—" His ideas fled suddenly. He stopped; but he kept his countenance so well that he had the air of having made a finished speech, and being perfectly satisfied with it.

"Do you mean that she can never feel sure of the justice of her title to her riches? That used to trouble me; but it no longer does so."

"Nonsense!" said Lucian. "I alluded to the disinterestedness of your friends."

"That does not trouble me either. Absolutely disinterested friends I do not seek, as I should only find them among idiots or somnambulists. As to those whose interests are base, they do not know how to conceal their motives from me. For the rest, I am not so unreasonable as to object to a fair account being taken of my wealth in estimating the value of my friendship."

"Do you not believe in the existence of persons who would like you just as well if you were poor?"

"Such persons would, merely to bring me nearer to themselves, wish me to become poor; for which I should not thank them. I set great store by the esteem my riches command, Lucian. It is the only set-off I have against the envy they inspire."

"Then you would refuse to believe in the disinterestedness of any man who—who—"

"Who wanted to marry me? On the contrary: I should be the last person to believe that a man could prefer my money to myself. If he were independent, and in a fair way to keep his place in the world without my help, I should despise him if he hesitated to approach me for fear of misconstruction. I do not think a man is ever thoroughly honest until he is superior to that fear. But if he had no profession, no money, and no aim except to live at my expense, then I should regard him as an adventurer, and treat him as one—unless I fell in love with him."

"Unless you fell in love with him!"

"That—assuming that such things really happen—would make a difference in my feeling, but none in my conduct. I would not marry an adventurer under any circumstances. I could cure myself of a misdirected passion, but not of a bad husband."

Lucian said nothing; he walked on with long, irregular steps, lowering at the pavement as if it were a difficult problem, and occasionally thrusting at it with his stick. At last he looked up, and said,

"Would you mind prolonging your walk a little by going round Bedford Square with me? I have something particular to say."

She turned and complied without a word; and they had traversed one side of the square before he spoke again, in these terms:

"On second thoughts, Lydia, this is neither the proper time nor place for an important communication. Excuse me for having taken you out of your way for nothing."

"I do not like this, Lucian. Important communications—in this case—corrupt good manners. If your intended speech is a sensible one, the present is as good a time, and Bedford Square as good a place, as you are likely to find for it. If it is otherwise, confess that you have decided to leave it unsaid. But do not postpone it. Reticence is always an error—even on the treasury bench. It is doubly erroneous in dealing with me; for I have a constitutional antipathy to it."

"Yes," he said, hurriedly; "but give me one moment—until the policeman has passed."

The policeman went leisurely by, striking the flags with his heels, and slapping his palm with a white glove.

"The fact is, Lydia, that—I feel great difficulty—"

"What is the matter?" said Lydia, after waiting in vain for further particulars. "You have broken down twice in a speech." There was a pause. Then she looked at him quickly, and added, incredulously, "Are you going to get married? Is that the secret that ties your practised tongue?"

"Not unless you take part in the ceremony."

"Very gallant; and in a vein of humor that is new in my experience of you. But what have you to tell me, Lucian? Frankly, your hesitation is becoming ridiculous."

"You have certainly not made matters easier for me, Lydia. Perhaps you have a womanly intuition of my purpose, and are intentionally discouraging me."

"Not the least. I am not good at speculations of that sort. On my word, if you do not confess quickly, I will hurry away to the museum."

"I cannot find a suitable form of expression," said Lucian, in painful perplexity. "I am sure you will not attribute any sordid motive to my—well, to my addresses, though the term seems absurd. I am too well aware that there is little, from the usual point of view, to tempt you to unite yourself to me. Still—"

A rapid change in Lydia's face showed him that he had said enough. "I had not thought of this," she said, after a silence that seemed long to him. "Our observations are so meaningless until we are given the thread to string them on! You must think better of this, Lucian. The relation that at present exists between us is the very best that our different characters will admit of. Why do you desire to alter it?"

"Because I would make it closer and more permanent. I do not wish to alter it otherwise."

"You would run some risk of simply destroying it by the method you propose," said Lydia, with composure. "We could not co-operate. There are differences of opinion between us amounting to differences of principle."

"Surely you are not serious. Your political opinions, or notions, are not represented by any party in England; and therefore they are practically ineffective, and could not clash with mine. And such differences are not personal matters."

"Such a party might be formed a week after our marriage—will, I think, be formed a long time before our deaths. In that case I fear that our difference of opinion would become a very personal matter."

He began to walk more quickly as he replied, "It is too absurd to set up what you call your opinions as a serious barrier between us. You have no opinions, Lydia. The impracticable crotchets you are fond of airing are not recognized in England as sane political convictions."

Lydia did not retort. She waited a minute in pensive silence, and then said,

"Why do you not marry Alice Goff?"

"Oh, hang Alice Goff!"

"It is so easy to come at the man beneath the veneer by expertly chipping at his feelings," said Lydia, laughing. "But I was serious, Lucian. Alice is energetic, ambitious, and stubbornly upright in questions of principle. I believe she would assist you steadily at every step of your career. Besides, she has physical robustness. Our student-stock needs an infusion of that."

"Many thanks for the suggestion; but I do not happen to want to marry Miss Goff."

"I invite you to consider it. You have not had time yet to form any new plans."

"New plans! Then you absolutely refuse me—without a moment's consideration?"

"Absolutely, Lucian. Does not your instinct warn you that it would be a mistake for you to marry me?"

"No; I cannot say that it does."

"Then trust to mine, which gives forth no uncertain note on this question, as your favorite newspapers are fond of saying."

"It is a question of feeling," he said, in a constrained voice.

"Is it?" she replied, with interest. "You have surprised me somewhat, Lucian. I have never observed any of the extravagances of a lover in your conduct."

"And you have surprised me very unpleasantly, Lydia. I do not think now that I ever had much hope of success; but I thought, at least, that my disillusion would be gently accomplished."

"What! Have I been harsh?"

"I do not complain."

"I was unlucky, Lucian; not malicious. Besides, the artifices by which friends endeavor to spare one another's feelings are pretty disloyalties. I am frank with you. Would you have me otherwise?"

"Of course not. I have no right to be offended."

"Not the least. Now add to that formal admission a sincere assurance that you *are* not offended."

"I assure you I am not," said Lucian, with melancholy resignation.

They had by this time reached Charlotte Street, and Lydia tacitly concluded the conference by turning towards the museum, and beginning to talk upon indifferent subjects. At the corner of Russell Street he got into a cab and drove away, dejectedly acknowledging a smile and wave of the hand with which Lydia tried to console him. She then went to the national library, where she forgot Lucian. The effect of the shock of his proposal was in store for her, but as yet she did not feel it; and she worked steadily until the library was closed and she had to leave. As she had been sitting for some hours, and it was still light, she did not take a cab, and did not even walk straight home. She had heard of a bookseller in Soho who had for sale a certain scarce volume which she wanted; and it occurred to her that the present was a good opportunity to go in search of him. Now, there was hardly a capital in western Europe that she did not know better than London. She had an impression that Soho was a region of quiet streets and squares, like Bloomsbury. Her mistake soon became apparent; but she felt no uneasiness in the narrow thoroughfares, for she was free from the common prejudice of her class that poor people are necessarily ferocious, though she often wondered why they were not so. She got as far as Great Pulteney Street in safety; but in leaving it she took a wrong turning and lost herself in a labyrinth of courts where a few workmen, a great many workmen's wives and mothers, and innumerable workmen's children were passing the summer evening at gossip and play. She explained her predicament to one of the women, who sent a little boy with her to guide her. Business being over for the day, the street to which the boy led her was almost deserted. The only shop that seemed to be thriving was a public-house, outside which a few roughs were tossing for pence.

Lydia's guide, having pointed out her way to her, prepared to return to his playmates. She thanked him, and gave him the smallest coin in her purse, which happened to be a shilling. He, in a transport at possessing what was to him a fortune, uttered a piercing yell, and darted off to show the coin to a covey of small ragamuffins who had just raced into view round the corner at which the public-house stood. In his haste he dashed against one of the group outside, a powerfully built young man, who turned and cursed him. The boy retorted passionately, and then, overcome by pain, began to cry. When Lydia came up the child stood whimpering directly in her path; and she, pitying him, patted him on the head and reminded him of all the money he had to spend. He seemed comforted, and scraped his eyes with his knuckles in silence; but the man, who, having received a sharp kick on the ankle, was stung by Lydia's injustice in according to the aggressor the sympathy due to himself, walked threateningly up to her and demanded, with a startling oath, whether *he* had offered to do anything to the boy. And, as he refrained from applying any epithet to her, he honestly believed that in deference to Lydia's sex and personal charms, he had expressed himself with studied moderation. She, not appreciating his forbearance, recoiled, and stepped into the roadway in order to pass him. Indignant at this attempt to ignore him, he again placed himself in her path, and was repeating his question with increased sternness, when a jerk in the pit of his stomach caused him a severe internal qualm, besides disturbing his equilibrium so rudely that he narrowly escaped a fall against the curbstone. When he recovered himself he saw before him a showily dressed young man, who accosted him thus:

"Is that the way to talk to a lady, eh? Isn't the street wide enough for two? Where's your manners?"

"And who are you; and where are you shoving your elbow to?" said the man, with a surpassing imprecation.

"Come, come," said Cashel Byron, admonitorily. "You'd better keep your mouth clean if you wish to keep your teeth inside it. Never you mind who I am."

Lydia, foreseeing an altercation, and alarmed by the threatening aspect of the man, attempted to hurry away and send a policeman to Cashel's assistance. But, on turning, she discovered that a crowd had already gathered, and that she was in the novel position of a spectator in the inner ring at what promised to be a street fight. Her attention was recalled to the disputants by a violent demonstration on the part of her late assailant. Cashel seemed alarmed; for he hastily retreated a step without regard to the toes of those behind him, and exclaimed, waving the other off with his open hand,

"Now, you just let me alone. I don't want to have anything to say to you. Go away from me, I tell you."

"You don't want to have nothink to say to me! Oh! And for why? Because you ain't man enough; that's why. Wot do you mean by coming and shoving your elbow into a man's bread-basket for, and then wanting to sneak off? Did you think I'd 'a' bin frightened of your velvet coat?"

"Very well," said Cashel, pacifically; "we'll say that I'm not man enough for you. So that's settled. Are you satisfied?"

But the other, greatly emboldened, declared with many oaths that he would have Cashel's heart out, and also that of Lydia, to whom he alluded in coarse terms. The crowd cheered, and called upon him to "go it." Cashel then said, sullenly,

"Very well. But don't you try to make out afterwards that I forced a quarrel on you. And now," he added, with a grim change of tone that made Lydia shudder, and shifted her fears to the account of his antagonist, "I'll make you wish you'd bit your tongue out before you said what you did a moment ago. So, take care of yourself."

"Oh, I'll take care of myself," said the man, defiantly. "Put up your hands."

Cashel surveyed his antagonist's attitude with unmistakable disparagement. "You will know when my hands are up by the feel of the pavement," he said, at last. "Better keep your coat on. You'll fall softer."

The rough expressed his repudiation of this counsel by beginning to strip energetically. A thrill of delight passed through the crowd. Those who had bad places pressed forward, and those who formed the inner ring pressed back to make room for the combatants. Lydia, who occupied a coveted position close to Cashel, hoped to be hustled out of the throng; for she was beginning to feel faint and ill. But a handsome butcher, who had made his way to her side, gallantly swore that she should not be deprived of her place in the front row, and bade her not be frightened, assuring her that he would protect her, and that the fight would be well worth seeing. As he spoke, the mass of faces before Lydia seemed to give a sudden lurch. To save herself from falling, she slipped her arm through the butcher's; and he, much gratified, tucked her close to him, and held her up effectually. His support was welcome, because it was needed.

Meanwhile, Cashel stood motionless, watching with unrelenting contempt the movements of his adversary, who rolled up his discolored shirt-sleeves amid encouraging cries of "Go it, Teddy," "Give it 'im, Ted," and other more precise suggestions. But Teddy's spirit was chilled; he advanced with a presentiment that he was courting destruction. He dared not rush on his foe, whose eye seemed to discern his impotence. When at last he ventured to strike, the blow fell short, as Cashel evidently knew it would; for he did not stir. There was a laugh and a murmur of impatience in the crowd.

"Are you waiting for the copper to come and separate you?" shouted the butcher. "Come out of your corner and get to work, can't you?"

This reminder that the police might balk him of his prey seemed to move Cashel. He took a step forward. The excitement of the crowd rose to a climax; and a little man near Lydia cut a frenzied caper and screamed, "Go it, Cashel Byron."

At these words Teddy was terror-stricken. He made no attempt to disguise his condition. "It ain't fair," he exclaimed, retreating as far as the crowd would permit him. "I give in. Cut it, master; you're too clever for me." But his comrades, with a pitiless jeer, pushed him towards Cashel, who advanced remorselessly. Teddy dropped on both knees. "Wot can a man say more than that he's had enough?" he pleaded. "Be a Englishman, master; and don't hit a man when he's down."

"Down!" said Cashel. "How long will you stay down if I choose to have you up?" And, suiting the action to the word, he seized Teddy with his left hand, lifted him to his feet, threw him into a helpless position across his knee, and poised his right fist like a hammer over his upturned face. "Now," he said, "you're not down. What have you to say for yourself before I knock your face down your throat?"

"Don't do it, gov'nor," gasped Teddy. "I didn't mean no harm. How was I to know that the young lady was a pal o' yourn?" Here he struggled a little; and his face assumed a darker hue. "Let go, master," he cried, almost inarticulately. "You're ch—choking me."

"Pray let him go," said Lydia, disengaging herself from the butcher and catching Cashel's arm.

Cashel, with a start, relaxed his grasp; and Teddy rolled on the ground. He went away thrusting his hands into his sleeves, and out-facing his disgrace by a callous grin. Cashel, without speaking, offered Lydia his arm; and she, seeing that her best course was to get away from that place with as few words as possible, accepted it, and then turned and thanked the butcher, who blushed and became speechless. The little man whose exclamation had interrupted the combat, now waved his hat, and cried,

"The British Lion forever! Three cheers for Cashel Byron."

Cashel turned upon him curtly, and said, "Don't you make so free with other people's names, or perhaps you may get into trouble yourself."

The little man retreated hastily; but the crowd responded with three cheers as Cashel, with Lydia on his arm, withdrew through a lane of disreputable-looking girls, roughs of Teddy's class, white-aproned shopmen who had left their counters to see the fight, and a few pale clerks, who looked with awe at the prize-fighter, and with wonder at the refined appearance of his companion. The two were followed by a double file of boys, who, with their eyes fixed earnestly on Cashel, walked on the footways while he conducted Lydia down the middle of the narrow street. Not one of them turned a somersault or uttered a shout. Intent on their hero, they pattered along, coming into collision with every object that lay in their path. At last Cashel stopped. They instantly stopped too. He took some bronze coin from his pocket, rattled it in his hand, and addressed them.

"Boys!" Dead silence. "Do you know what I have to do to keep up my strength?" The hitherto steadfast eyes wandered uneasily. "I have to eat a little boy for supper every night, the last thing before going to bed. Now, I haven't quite made up my mind which of you would be the most to my taste; but if one of you comes a step further, I'll eat *him*. So, away with you." And he jerked the coin to a considerable distance. There was a yell and a scramble; and Cashel and Lydia pursued their way unattended.

Lydia had taken advantage of the dispersion of the boys to detach herself from Cashel's arm. She now said, speaking to him for the first time since she had interceded for Teddy,

"I am sorry to have given you so much trouble, Mr. Cashel Byron. Thank you for interfering to protect me; but I was in no real danger. I would gladly have borne with a few rough words for the sake of avoiding a disturbance."

"There!" cried Cashel. "I knew it. You'd a deal rather I had minded my own business and not interfered. You're sorry for the poor fellow I treated so badly; ain't you now? That's a woman all over."

"I have not said one of these things."

"Well, I don't see what else you mean. It's no pleasure to me to fight chance men in the streets for nothing: I don't get my living that way. And now that I have done it for your sake, you as good as tell me I ought to have kept myself quiet."

"Perhaps I am wrong. I hardly understand what passed. You seemed to drop from the clouds."

"Aha! You were glad when you found me at your elbow, in spite of your talk. Come now; weren't you glad to see me?"

"I was—very glad indeed. But by what magic did you so suddenly subdue that man? And was it necessary to sully your hands by throttling him?"

"It was a satisfaction to me; and it served him right."

"Surely a very poor satisfaction! Did you notice that some one in the crowd called out your name, and that it seemed to frighten the man terribly?"

"Indeed? Odd, wasn't it? But you were saying that you thought I dropped from the sky. Why, I had been following you for five minutes before! What do you think of that? If I may take the liberty of asking, how did you come to be walking round Soho at such an hour with a little ragged boy?"

Lydia explained. When she finished, it was nearly dark, and they had reached Oxford Street, where, like Lucian in Regent's Park that afternoon, she became conscious that her companion was an object of curiosity to many of the young men who were lounging in that thoroughfare.

"Alice will think that I am lost," she said, making a signal to a cabman. "Good-bye; and many thanks. I am always at home on Fridays, and shall be very happy to see you."

She handed him a card. He took it, read it, looked at the back to see if there was anything written there, and then said, dubiously,

"I suppose there will be a lot of people."

"Yes; you will meet plenty of people."

"Hm! I wish you'd let me see you home now. I won't ask to go any further than the gate."

Lydia laughed. "You should be very welcome," she said; "but I am quite safe, thank you. I need not trouble you."

"But suppose the cabman bullies you for double fare," persisted Cashel. "I have business up in Finchley; and your place is right in my way there. Upon my soul I have," he added, suspecting that she doubted him. "I go every Tuesday evening to the St. John's Wood Cestus Club."

"I am hungry and in a hurry to get home," said Lydia. "'I must be gone and live, or stay and die.' Come if you will; but in any case let us go at once."

She got into the cab, and Cashel followed, making some remark which she did not quite catch about its being too dark for any one to recognize him. They spoke little during the drive, which was soon over. Bashville was standing at the open door as they came to the house. When Cashel got out the footman looked at him with interest and some surprise. But when Lydia alighted he was so startled that he stood open-mouthed, although he was trained to simulate insensibility to everything except his own business, and to do that as automatically as possible. Cashel bade Lydia good-bye, and shook hands with her. As she went into the house, she asked Bashville whether Miss Goff was within. To her surprise, he paid no attention to her, but stared after the retreating cab. She repeated the question.

"Madam," he said, recovering himself with a start, "she has asked for you four times."

Lydia, relieved of a disagreeable suspicion that her usually faultless footman must be drunk, thanked him and went up-stairs.

CHAPTER VIII

One morning a handsome young man, elegantly dressed, presented himself at Downing Street, and asked to see Mr. Lucian Webber. He declined to send in a card, and desired to be announced simply as "Bashville." Lucian ordered him to be admitted at once, and, when he entered, nodded affably to him and invited him to sit down.

"I thank you, sir," said Bashville, seating himself. It struck Lucian then, from a certain strung-up resolution in his visitor's manner, that he had come on some business of his own, and not, as he had taken for granted, with a message from his mistress.

"I have come, sir, on my own responsibility this morning. I hope you will excuse the liberty."

"Certainly. If I can do anything for you, Bashville, don't be afraid to ask. But be as brief as you can. I am so busy that every second I give you will probably be subtracted from my night's rest. Will ten minutes be enough?"

"More than enough, sir, thank you. I only wish to ask one question. I own that I am stepping out of my place to ask it; but I'll risk all that. Does Miss Carew know what the Mr. Cashel Byron is that she receives every Friday with her other friends?"

"No doubt she does," said Lucian, at once becoming cold in his manner, and looking severely at Bashville. "What business is that of yours?"

"Do *you* know what he is, sir?" said Bashville, returning Lucian's gaze steadily.

Lucian changed countenance, and replaced a pen that had slipped from a rack on his desk. "He is not an acquaintance of mine," he said. "I only know him as a friend of Lord Worthington's."

"Sir," said Bashville, with sudden vehemence, "he is no more to Lord Worthington than the racehorse his lordship bets on. *I* might as well set up to be a friend of his lordship because I, after a manner of speaking, know him. Byron is in the ring, sir. A common prize-fighter!"

Lucian, recalling what had passed at Mrs. Hoskyn's, and Lord Worthington's sporting habits, believed the assertion at once. But he made a faint effort to resist conviction. "Are you sure of this, Bashville?" he said. "Do you know that your statement is a very serious one?"

"There is no doubt at all about it, sir. Go to any sporting public-house in London and ask who is the best-known fighting man of the day, and they'll tell you, Cashel Byron. I know all about him, sir. Perhaps you have heard tell of Ned Skene, who was champion, belike, when you were at school."

"I believe I have heard the name."

"Just so, sir. Ned Skene picked up this Cashel Byron in the streets of Melbourne, where he was a common sailor-boy, and trained him for the ring. You may have seen his name in the papers, sir. The sporting ones are full of him; and he was mentioned in the *Times* a month ago."

"I never read articles on such subjects. I have hardly time to glance through the ones that concern me."

"That's the way it is with everybody, sir. Miss Carew never thinks of reading the sporting intelligence in the papers; and so he passes himself off on her for her equal. He's well known for his wish to be thought a gentleman, sir, I assure you."

"I have noticed his manner as being odd, certainly."

"Odd, sir! Why, a child might see through him; for he has not the sense to keep his own secret. Last Friday he was in the library, and he got looking at the new biographical dictionary that Miss Carew contributed the article on Spinoza to. And what do you think he said, sir? 'This is a blessed book,' he says. 'Here's ten pages about Napoleon Bonaparte, and not one about Jack Randall; as if one fighting man wasn't as good as another!' I knew by the way the mistress took up that saying, and drew him out, so to speak, on the subject, that she didn't know who she had in her house; and then I determined to tell you, sir. I hope you won't think that I come here behind his back out of malice against him. All I want is fair play. If I passed myself off on Miss Carew as a gentleman, I should deserve to be exposed as a cheat; and when he tries to take advantages that don't belong to him, I think I have a right to expose him."

"Quite right, quite right," said Lucian, who cared nothing for Bashville's motives. "I suppose this Byron is a dangerous man to have any personal unpleasantness with."

"He knows his business, sir. I am a better judge of wrestling than half of these London professionals; but I never saw the man that could put a hug on him. Simple as he is, sir, he has a genius for fighting, and has beaten men of all sizes, weights, and colors. There's a new man from the black country, named Paradise, who says he'll beat him; but I won't believe it till I see it."

"Well," said Lucian, rising, "I am much indebted to you, Bashville, for your information; and I will take care to let Miss Carew know how you have—"

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Bashville; "but, if you please, no. I did not come to recommend myself at the cost of another man; and perhaps Miss Carew might not think it any great recommendation neither." Lucian looked quickly at him, and seemed about to speak, but checked himself. Bashville continued, "If he denies it, you may call me as a witness, and I will tell him to his face that he lies—and so I would if he were twice as dangerous; but, except in that way, I would ask you, sir, as a favor, not to mention my name to Miss Carew."

"As you please," said Lucian, taking out his purse. "Perhaps you are right. However, you shall not have your trouble for nothing."

"I couldn't, really, sir," said Bashville, retreating a step. "You will agree with me, I'm sure, that this is not a thing that a man should take payment for. It is a personal matter between me and Byron, sir."

Lucian, displeased that a servant should have any personal feelings on any subject, much more one that concerned his mistress, put back his purse without comment and said, "Will Miss Carew be at home this afternoon between three and four?"

"I have not heard of any arrangement to the contrary, sir. I will telegraph to you if she goes out—if you wish."

"It does not matter. Thank you. Good-morning."

"Good-morning, sir," said Bashville, respectfully, as he withdrew. Outside the door his manner changed. He put on a pair of primrose gloves, took up a silver-mounted walking-stick that he had left in the corridor, and walked from Downing Street into Whitehall. A party of visitors from the country, who were standing there examining the buildings, guessed that he was a junior lord of the Treasury.

He waited in vain that afternoon for Lucian to appear at the house in Regent's Park. There were no callers, and he wore away the time by endeavoring, with the aid of a library that Miss Carew had placed at the disposal of her domestics, to unravel the philosophy of Spinoza. At the end of an hour, feeling satisfied that he had mastered that author's views, he proceeded to vary the monotony of the long summer's day by polishing Lydia's plate.

Meanwhile, Lucian was considering how he could best make Lydia not only repudiate Cashel's acquaintance, but feel thoroughly ashamed of herself for having encouraged him, and wholesomely mistrustful of her own judgment for the future. His parliamentary experience had taught him to provide himself with a few well-arranged, relevant facts before attempting to influence the opinions of others on any subject. He knew no more of prize-fighting than that it was a brutal and illegal practice, akin to cock-fighting, and, like it, generally supposed to be obsolete. Knowing how prone Lydia was to suspect any received opinion of being a prejudice, he felt that he must inform himself more particularly. To Lord Worthington's astonishment, he not only asked him to dinner next evening, but listened with interest while he descanted to his heart's content on his favorite topic of the ring.

As the days passed, Bashville became nervous, and sometimes wondered whether Lydia had met her cousin and heard from him of the interview at Downing Street. He fancied that her manner towards him was changed; and he was once or twice on the point of asking the most sympathetic of the housemaids whether she had noticed it. On Wednesday his suspense ended. Lucian came, and had a long conversation with Lydia in the library. Bashville was too honorable to listen at the door; but he felt a strong temptation to do so, and almost hoped that the sympathetic housemaid might prove less scrupulous. But Miss Carew's influence extended farther than her bodily presence; and Lucian's revelation was made in complete privacy.

When he entered the library he looked so serious that she asked him whether he had neuralgia, from which he occasionally suffered. He replied with some indignation that he had not, and that he had a communication of importance to make to her.

"What! Another!"

"Yes, another," he said, with a sour smile; "but this time it does not concern myself. May I warn you as to the character of one of your guests without overstepping my privilege?"

"Certainly. But perhaps you mean Vernet. If so, I am perfectly aware that he is an exiled Communard."

"I do not mean Monsieur Vernet. You understand, I hope, that I do not approve of him, nor of your strange fancy for Nihilists, Fenians, and other doubtful persons; but I think that even you might draw the line at a prize-fighter."

Lydia lost color, and said, almost inaudibly, "Cashel Byron!"

"Then you *knew!*" exclaimed Lucian, scandalized.

Lydia waited a moment to recover, settled herself quietly in her chair, and replied, calmly, "I know what you tell me—nothing more. And now, will you explain to me exactly what a prize-fighter is?"

"He is simply what his name indicates. He is a man who fights for prizes."

"So does the captain of a man-of-war. And yet society does not place them in the same class—at least, I do not think so."

"As if there could be any doubt that society does not! There is no analogy whatever between the two cases. Let me endeavor to open your eyes a little, if that be possible, which I am sometimes tempted to doubt. A prize-fighter is usually a man of naturally ferocious disposition, who has acquired some reputation among his associates as a bully; and who, by constantly quarrelling, has acquired some practice in fighting. On the strength of this reputation he can generally find some gambler willing to stake a sum of money that he will vanquish a pugilist of established fame in single combat. Bets are made between the admirers of the two men; a prize is subscribed for, each party contributing a share; the combatants are trained as racehorses, gamecocks, or their like are trained; they meet, and beat each other as savagely as they can until one or the other is too much injured to continue the combat. This takes place in the midst of a mob of such persons as enjoy spectacles of the kind; that is to say, the vilest blackguards whom a large city can afford to leave at large, and many whom it cannot. As the prize-money contributed by each side often amounts to upwards of a thousand pounds, and as a successful pugilist commands far higher terms for giving tuition in boxing than a tutor at one of the universities does for coaching, you will see that such a man, while his youth and luck last, may have plenty of money, and may even, by aping the manners of the gentlemen whom he teaches, deceive careless people—especially those who admire eccentricity—as to his character and position."

"What is his true position? I mean before he becomes a prize-fighter."

"Well, he may be a handicraftsman of some kind: a journeyman butcher, skinner, tailor, or baker. Possibly a soldier, sailor, policeman, gentleman's servant, or what not? But he is generally a common laborer. The waterside is prolific of such heroes."

"Do they never come from a higher rank?"

"Never even from the better classes in their own. Broken-down gentlemen are not likely to succeed at work that needs the strength and endurance of a bull and the cruelty of a butcher."

"And the end of a prize-fighter. What is that like?"

"He soon has to give up his trade. For, if he be repeatedly beaten, no one will either bet on him or subscribe to provide him with a stake. If he is invariably successful, those, if any, who dare fight him find themselves in a like predicament. In either case his occupation is gone. If he has saved money he opens a sporting public-house, where he sells spirits of the worst description to his old rivals and their associates, and eventually drinks himself to death or bankruptcy. If, however, he has been improvident or unfortunate, he begs from his former patrons and gives lessons. Finally, when the patrons are tired of him and the pupils fail, he relapses into the laboring class with a ruined constitution, a disfigured face, a brutalized nature, and a tarnished reputation."

Lydia remained silent so long after this that Lucian's expression of magisterial severity first deepened, then wavered, and finally gave way to a sense of injury; for she seemed to have forgotten him. He was about to protest against this treatment, when she looked at him again, and said,

"Why did Lord Worthington introduce a man of this class to me?"

"Because you asked him to do so. Probably he thought that if you chose to make such a request without previous inquiry, you should not blame him if you found yourself saddled with an undesirable acquaintance. Recollect that you asked for the introduction on the platform at Wiltstoken, in the presence of the man himself. Such a ruffian would be capable of making a disturbance for much less offence than an explanation and refusal would have given him."

"Lucian," said Lydia, in a tone of gentle admonition, "I asked to be introduced to my tenant, for whose respectability you had vouched by letting the Warren Lodge to him." Lucian reddened. "How does Lord Worthington explain Mr. Byron's appearance at Mrs. Hoskyn's?"

"It was a stupid joke. Mrs. Hoskyn had worried Worthington to bring some celebrity to her house; and, in revenge, he took his pugilistic *protégé*."

"Hm!"

"I do not defend Worthington. But discretion is hardly to be expected from him."

"He has discretion enough to understand a case of this kind thoroughly. But let that pass. I have been thinking upon what you tell me about these singular people, whose existence I hardly knew of before. Now, Lucian, in the course of my reading I have come upon denunciations of every race and pursuit under the sun. Very respectable and well-informed men have held that Jews, Irishmen, Christians, atheists, lawyers, doctors, politicians, actors, artists, flesh-eaters, and spirit-drinkers are all of necessity degraded beings. Such statements can be easily proved by taking a black sheep from each flock, and holding him up as the type. It is more reasonable to argue a man's character from the nature of his profession; and yet even that is very unsafe. War is a cruel business; but soldiers are not necessarily bloodthirsty and inhuman men. I am not quite satisfied that a prize-fighter is a violent and dangerous man because he follows a violent and dangerous profession—I suppose they call it a profession."

Lucian was about to speak; but she interrupted him by continuing,

"And yet that is not what concerns me at present. Have you found out anything about Mr. Byron personally? Is he an ordinary representative of his class?"

"No; I should rather think—and hope—that he is a very extraordinary representative of it. I have traced his history back to his boyhood, when he was a cabin-boy. Having apparently failed to recommend himself to his employers in that capacity, he became errand-boy to a sort of *maître d'armes* at Melbourne. Here he discovered where his genius lay; and he presently appeared in the ring with an unfortunate young man named Ducket, whose jaw he fractured. This laid the foundation of his fame. He fought several battles with unvarying success; but at last he allowed his valor to get the better of his discretion so far as to kill an Englishman who contended with him with desperate obstinacy for two hours. I am informed that the particular blow by which he felled the poor wretch for the last time is known in pugilistic circles as 'Cashel's killer,' and that he has attempted to repeat it in all his subsequent encounters, without, however, achieving the same fatal result. The failure has doubtless been a severe disappointment to him. He fled from Australia and reappeared in America, where he resumed his victorious career, distinguishing himself specially by throwing a gigantic opponent in some dreadful fashion that these men have, and laming him for life. He then—"

"Thank you, Lucian," said Lydia rather faintly. "That is quite enough. Are you sure that it is all true?"

"My authority is Lord Worthington, and a number of newspaper reports which he showed me. Byron himself will probably be proud to give you the fullest confirmation of the record. I should add, in justice to him, that he is looked upon as a model—to pugilists—of temperance and general good conduct."

"Do you remember my remarking a few days ago, on another subject, how meaningless our observations are until we are given the right thread to string them on?"

"Yes," said Webber, disconcerted by the allusion.

"My acquaintance with this man is a case in point. He has obtruded his horrible profession upon me every time we have met. I have actually seen him publicly cheered as a pugilist-hero; and yet, being off the track, and ignorant of the very existence of such a calling, I have looked on and seen nothing."

Lydia then narrated her adventure in Soho, and listened with the perfect patience of indifference to his censure of her imprudence in going there alone.

"And now, Lydia," he added, "may I ask what you intend to do in this matter?"

"What would you have me do?"

"Drop his acquaintance at once. Forbid him your house in the most explicit terms."

"A pleasant task!" said Lydia, ironically. "But I will do it—not so much, perhaps, because he is a prize-fighter, as because he is an impostor. Now go to the writing-table and draft me a proper letter to send him."

Lucian's face elongated. "I think," he said, "you can do that better for yourself. It is a delicate sort of thing."

"Yes. It is not so easy as you implied a moment ago. Otherwise I should not require your assistance. As it is—" She pointed again to the table.

Lucian was not ready with an excuse. He sat down reluctantly, and, after some consideration, indited the following:

"Miss Carew presents her compliments to Mr. Cashel Byron, and begs to inform him that she will not be at home during the remainder of the season as heretofore. She therefore regrets that she cannot have the pleasure of receiving him on Friday afternoon."

"I think you will find that sufficient," said Lucian.

"Probably," said Lydia, smiling as she read it. "But what shall I do if he takes offence; calls here, breaks the windows, and beats Bashville? Were I in his place, that is what such a letter would provoke me to do."

"He dare not give any trouble. But I will warn the police if you feel anxious."

"By no means. We must not show ourselves inferior to him in courage, which is, I suppose, his cardinal virtue."

"If you write the note now, I will post it for you."

"No, thank you. I will send it with my other letters."

Lucian would rather have waited; but she would not write while he was there. So he left, satisfied on the whole with the success of his mission. When he was gone, she took a pen, endorsed his draft neatly, placed it in a drawer, and wrote to Cashel thus:

"Dear Mr. Cashel Byron,—I have just discovered your secret. I am sorry; but you must not come again. Farewell. Yours faithfully,

"Lydia Carew."

Lydia kept this note by her until next morning, when she read it through carefully. She then sent Bashville to the post with it.

CHAPTER IX

CASHEL'S pupils frequently requested him to hit them hard—not to play with them—to accustom them to regular, right down, severe hitting, and no nonsense. He only pretended to comply; for he knew that a black eye or loosened tooth would be immoderately boasted of if received in combat with a famous pugilist, and that the sufferer's friends would make private notes to avoid so rough a professor. But when Miss Carew's note reached him he made an exception to his practice in this respect. A young guardsman, whose lesson began shortly after the post arrived, remarked that Cashel was unusually distraught. He therefore exhorted his instructor to wake up and pitch into him in earnest. Immediately he received a blow in the epigastrium that stretched him almost insensible on the floor. Rising with his complexion considerably whitened, he recollected an appointment which would prevent him from finishing his lesson, and withdrew, declaring in a somewhat shaky voice that that was the sort of bout he really enjoyed.

Cashel did not at first make any profitable use of the leisure thus earned. He walked to and fro, cursing, and occasionally stopping to read the letter. His restlessness only increased his agitation. The arrival of a Frenchman whom he employed to give lessons in fencing made the place unendurable to him. He changed his attire, went out, called a cab, and bade the driver, with an oath, drive to Lydia's house as fast as the horse could go. The man made all the haste he could, and was presently told impatiently that there was no hurry. Accustomed to this sort of inconsistency, he was not surprised when, as they approached the house, he was told not to stop but to drive slowly past. Then, in obedience to further instructions, he turned and repassed the door. As he did so a lady appeared for an instant at a window. Immediately his fare, with a groan of mingled rage and fear, sprang from the moving vehicle, rushed up the steps of the mansion, and rang the bell violently. Bashville, faultlessly dressed and impassibly mannered, opened the door. In reply to Cashel's half-inarticulate inquiry, he said,

"Miss Carew is not at home."

"You lie," said Cashel, his eyes suddenly dilating. "I saw her."

Bashville reddened, but replied, coolly, "Miss Carew cannot see you to-day."

"Go and ask her," returned Cashel sternly, advancing.

Bashville, with compressed lips, seized the door to shut him out; but Cashel forced it back against him, sent him reeling some paces by its impact, went in, and shut the door behind him. He had to turn from Bashville for a moment to do this, and before he could face him again he was clutched, tripped, and flung down upon the tessellated pavement of the hall.

When Cashel gave him the lie, and pushed the door against him, the excitement he had been suppressing since his visit to Lucian exploded. He had thrown Cashel in Cornish fashion, and now desperately awaited the upshot.

Cashel got up so rapidly that he seemed to rebound from the flags. Bashville, involuntarily cowering before his onslaught, just escaped his right fist, and felt as though his heart had been drawn with it as it whizzed past his ear. He turned and fled frantically up-stairs, mistaking for the clatter of pursuit the noise with which Cashel, overbalanced by his ineffectual blow, stumbled against the banisters.

Lydia was in her boudoir with Alice when Bashville darted in and locked the door. Alice rose and screamed. Lydia, though startled, and that less by the unusual action than by the change in a familiar face which she had never seen influenced by emotion before, sat still and quietly asked what was the matter. Bashville checked himself for a moment. Then he spoke unintelligibly, and went to the window, which he opened. Lydia divined that he was about to call for help to the street.

"Bashville," she said, authoritatively: "be silent, and close the window. I will go down-stairs myself."

Bashville then ran to prevent her from unlocking the door; but she paid no attention to him. He did not dare to oppose her forcibly. He was beginning to recover from his panic, and to feel the first stings of shame for having yielded to it.

"Madam," he said: "Byron is below; and he insists on seeing you. He's dangerous; and he's too strong for me. I have done my best—on my honor I have. Let me call the police. Stop," he added, as she opened the door. "If either of us goes, it must be me."

"I will see him in the library," said Lydia, composedly. "Tell him so; and let him wait there for me—if you can approach him without running any risk."

"Oh, pray let him call the police," urged Alice. "Don't attempt to go to that man."

"Nonsense!" said Lydia, good-humoredly. "I am not in the least afraid. We must not fail in courage when we have a prize-fighter to deal with."

Bashville, white, and preventing with difficulty his knees from knocking together, went down-stairs and found Cashel leaning upon the balustrade, panting, and looking perplexedly about him as he wiped his dabbled brow. Bashville approached him with the firmness of a martyr, halted on the third stair, and said,

"Miss Carew will see you in the library. Come this way, please."

Cashel's lips moved, but no sound came from them; he followed Bashville in silence. When they entered the library Lydia was already there. Bashville withdrew without a word. Then Cashel sat down, and, to her consternation, bent his head on his hand and yielded to an hysterical convulsion. Before she could resolve how to act he looked up at her with his face distorted and discolored, and tried to speak.

"Pray be calm," said Lydia. "I am told that you wish to speak to me."

"I don't wish to speak to you ever again," said Cashel, hoarsely. "You told your servant to throw me down the steps. That's enough for me."

Lydia caught from him the tendency to sob which he was struggling with; but she repressed it, and answered, firmly, "If my servant has been guilty of the least incivility to you, Mr. Cashel Byron, he has exceeded his orders."

"It doesn't matter," said Cashel. "He may thank his luck that he has his head on. If I had planted on him that time—but *he* doesn't matter. Hold on a bit—I can't talk—I shall get my second wind presently, and then—" Cashel stopped a moment to pant, and then asked, "Why are you going to give me up?"

Lydia ranged her wits in battle array, and replied, "Do you remember our conversation at Mrs. Hoskyn's?"

"Yes."

"You admitted then that if the nature of your occupation became known to me our acquaintance should cease. That has now come to pass."

"That was all very fine talk to excuse my not telling you. But I find, like many another man when put to the proof, that I didn't mean it. Who told you I was a fighting man?"

"I had rather not tell you that."

"Aha!" said Cashel, with a triumph that was half choked by the remnant of his hysteria. "Who is trying to make a secret now, I should like to know?"

"I do so in this instance because I am afraid to expose a friend to your resentment."

"And why? He's a man, of course; else you wouldn't be afraid. You think that I'd go straight off and murder him. Perhaps he told you that it would come quite natural to a man like me—a ruffian like me—to smash him up. That comes of being a coward. People run my profession down; not because there is a bad one or two in it—there's plenty of bad bishops, if you come to that—but because they're afraid of us. You may make yourself easy about your friend. I am accustomed to get well paid for the beatings I give; and your own common-sense ought to tell you that any one who is used to being paid for a job is just the last person in the world to do it for nothing."

"I find the contrary to be the case with first-rate artists," said Lydia.

"Thank you," retorted Cashel, sarcastically. "I ought to make you a bow for that. I'm glad you acknowledge that it *is* an art."

"But," said Lydia seriously, "it seems to me that it is an art wholly anti-social and retrograde. And I fear that you have forced this interview on me to no purpose."

"I don't know whether it's anti-social or not. But I think it hard that I should be put out of decent society when fellows that do far worse than I are let in. Who did I see here last Friday, the most honored of your guests? Why, that Frenchman with the gold spectacles. What do you think I was told when I asked what *his* little game was? Baking dogs in ovens to see how long a dog could live red hot! I'd like to catch him doing it to a dog of mine. Ay; and sticking a rat full of nails to see how much pain a rat could stand. Why, it's just sickening. Do you think I'd have shaken hands with that chap? If he hadn't been a guest of yours I'd have given him a notion of how much pain a Frenchman can stand without any nails in him. And *he's* to be received and made much of, while I am kicked out! Look at your relation, the general. What is he but a fighting man, I should like to know? Isn't it his pride and boast that as long as he is paid so much a day he'll ask no questions whether a war is fair or unfair, but just walk out and put thousands of men in the best way to kill and be killed?—keeping well behind them himself all the time, mind you. Last year he was up to his chin in the blood of a lot of poor blacks that were no more a match for his armed men than a feather-weight would be for me. Bad as I am, I wouldn't attack a feather-weight, or stand by and see another heavy man do it. Plenty of your friends go pigeon-shooting to Hurlingham. *There's* a humane and manly way of spending a Saturday afternoon! Lord Worthington, that comes to see you when he likes, though he's too much of a man or too little of a shot to kill pigeons, thinks nothing of fox-hunting. Do you think foxes like to be hunted, or that the people that hunt them have such fine feelings that they can afford to call prize-fighters names? Look at the men that get killed or lamed every year at steeplechasing, fox-hunting, cricket, and foot-ball! Dozens of them! Look at the thousands killed in battle! Did you ever hear of any one being killed in the ring? Why, from first to last, during the whole century that prize-fighting has been going on, there's not been six fatal accidents at really respectable fights. It's safer than dancing; many a woman has danced her skirt into the fire and been burned. I once fought a man who had spoiled his constitution with bad living; and he exhausted himself so by going on and on long after he was beaten that he died of it, and nearly finished me, too. If you'd heard the fuss that even the oldest fighting men made over it you'd have thought that a baby had died from falling out of its cradle. A good milling does a man more good than harm. And if all these—dog-bakers, and soldiers, and pigeon-shooters, and fox-hunters, and the rest of them—are made welcome here, why am I shut out like a brute beast?"

"Truly I do not know," said Lydia, puzzled; "unless it be that your colleagues have failed to recommend themselves to society by their extra-professional conduct as the others have."

"I grant you that fighting men ar'n't gentlemen, as a rule. No more were painters, or poets, once upon a time. But what I want to know is this: Supposing a fighting man has as good manners as your friends, and is as well born, why shouldn't he mix with them and be considered their equal?"

"The distinction seems arbitrary, I confess. But perhaps the true remedy would be to exclude the vivisectors and soldiers, instead of admitting the prizefighters. Mr. Cashel Byron," added Lydia, changing her manner, "I cannot discuss this with you. Society has a prejudice against you. I share it; and I cannot overcome it. Can you find no nobler occupation than these fierce and horrible encounters by which you condescend to gain a living?"

"No," said Cashel, flatly. "I can't. That's just where it is."

Lydia looked grave, and said nothing.

"You don't see it?" said Cashel. "Well, I'll just tell you all about myself, and then leave you to judge. May I sit down while I talk?" He had risen in the course of his remarks on Lydia's scientific and military acquaintances.

She pointed to a chair near her. Something in the action brought color to his cheeks.

"I believe I was the most unfortunate devil of a boy that ever walked," he began, when he was seated. "My mother was—and is—an actress, and a tiptop crack in her profession. One of the first things I remember is sitting on the floor in the corner of a room where there was a big glass, and she flaring away before it, attitudinizing and spouting Shakespeare like mad. I was afraid of her, because she was very particular about my manners and appearance, and would never let me go near a theatre. I know very little about either my people or hers; for she boxed my ears one day for asking who my father was, and I took good care not to ask her again. She was quite young when I was a child; at first I thought her a sort of angel—

I should have been fond of her, I think, if she had let me. But she didn't, somehow; and I had to keep my affection for the servants. I had plenty of variety in that way; for she gave her whole establishment the sack about once every two months, except a maid who used to bully her, and gave me nearly all the nursing I ever got. I believe it was my crying about some housemaid or other who went away that first set her abusing me for having low tastes—a sort of thing that used to cut me to the heart, and which she kept up till the very day I left her for good. We were a precious pair: I sulky and obstinate, she changeable and hot-tempered. She used to begin breakfast sometimes by knocking me to the other side of the room with a slap, and finish it by calling me her darling boy and promising me all manner of toys and things. I soon gave up trying to please her, or like her, and became as disagreeable a young imp as you'd ask to see. My only thought was to get all I could out of her when she was in a good-humor, and to be sullen and stubborn when she was in a tantrum. One day a boy in the street threw some mud at me, and I ran in crying and complained to her. She told me I was a little coward. I haven't forgiven her for that yet—perhaps because it was one of the few true things she ever said to me. I was in a state of perpetual aggravation; and I often wonder that I wasn't soured for life at that time. At last I got to be such a little fiend that when she hit me I used to guard off her blows, and look so wicked that I think she got afraid of me. Then she put me to school, telling me that I had no heart, and telling the master that I was an ungovernable young brute. So I, like a little fool, cried at leaving her; and she, like a big one, cried back again over me—just after telling the master what a bad one I was, mind you—and off she went, leaving her darling boy and blessed child howling at his good luck in getting rid of her.

"I was a nice boy to let loose in a school. I could speak as well as an actor, as far as pronunciation goes; but I could hardly read words of one syllable; and as to writing, I couldn't make pothooks and hangers respectably. To this day, I can no more spell than old Ned Skene can. What was a worse sort of ignorance was that I had no idea of fair play. I thought that all servants would be afraid of me, and that all grown-up people would tyrannize over me. I was afraid of everybody; afraid that my cowardice would be found out; and as angry and cruel in my ill-tempers as cowards always are. Now you'll hardly believe this; but what saved me from going to the bad altogether was my finding out that I was a good one to fight. The bigger boys were given to fighting, and used to have mills every Saturday afternoon, with seconds, bottle-holders, and everything complete, except the ropes and stakes. We little chaps used to imitate them among ourselves as best we could. At first, when they made me fight, I shut my eyes and cried; but for all that I managed to catch the other fellow tight round the waist and throw him. After that it became a regular joke to make me fight, for I always cried. But the end of it was that I learned to keep my eyes open and hit straight. I had no trouble about fighting then. Somehow, I could tell by instinct when the other fellow was going to hit me, and I always hit him first. It's the same with me now in the ring; I know what a man is going to do before he rightly knows himself. The power that this gave me, civilized me. It made me cock of the school; and I had to act accordingly. I had enough good-nature left to keep me from being a bully; and, as cock, I couldn't be mean or childish. There would be nothing like fighting for licking boys into shape if every one could be cock; but every one can't; so I suppose it does more harm than good.

"I should have enjoyed school well enough if I had worked at my books. But I wouldn't study; and the masters were all down on me as an idler—though I shouldn't have been like that if they had known how to teach—I have learned since what teaching is. As to the holidays, they were the worst part of the year to me. When I was left at school I was savage at not being let go home; and when I went home my mother did nothing but find fault with my school-boy manners. I was getting too big to be cuddled as her darling boy, you understand. In fact, her treatment of me was just the old game with the affectionate part left out. It wasn't pleasant, after being cock of the school, to be made feel like a good-for-nothing little brat tied to her apron-strings. When she saw that I was learning nothing she sent me to another school at a place in the north called Panley. I stayed there until I was seventeen; and then she came one day, and we had a row, as usual. She said she wouldn't let me leave school until I was nineteen; and so I settled that question by running away the same night. I got to Liverpool, where I hid in a ship bound for Australia. When I was starved out they treated me better than I expected; and I worked hard enough to earn my passage and my victuals. But when I was left ashore in Melbourne I was in a pretty pickle. I knew nobody, and I had no money. Everything that a man could live by was owned by some one or other. I walked through the town looking for a place where they might want a boy to run errands or to clean windows. But somehow I hadn't the cheek to go into the shops and ask. Two or three times, when I was on the point of trying, I caught sight of some cad of a shopman, and made up my mind that I wouldn't be ordered about by *him*, and that since I had the whole town to choose from I might as well go on to the next place. At last, quite late in the afternoon, I saw an advertisement stuck up on a gymnasium, and, while I was reading it, I got talking to old Ned Skene, the owner, who was smoking at the door. He took a fancy to me, and offered to have me there as a sort of lad-of-all-work. I was only too glad to get the chance, and I closed with him at once. As time went on I became so clever with the gloves that Ned matched me against a light-weight named Ducket, and bet a lot of money that I would win. Well, I couldn't disappoint him after his being so kind to me—Mrs. Skene had made as much of me as if I was her own son. What could I do but take my bread as it came to me? I was fit for nothing else. Even if I had been able to write a good hand and keep accounts I couldn't have brought myself to think that quill-driving and counting other people's money was a fit employment for a man. It's not what a man would like to do that he must do in this world, it's what he *can* do; and the only mortal thing I could do properly was to fight. There was plenty of money and plenty of honor and glory among my acquaintances to be got by fighting. So I challenged Ducket, and knocked him all to pieces in about ten minutes. I half killed him because I didn't know my own strength and was afraid of him. I have been at the same work ever since. I was training for a fight when I was down at Wiltstoken; and Mellish was my trainer. It came off the day you saw me at Clapham; that was how I came to have a black eye. Wiltstoken did for me. With all my nerve and science, I'm no better than a baby at heart; and ever since I found out that my mother wasn't an angel I have always had a notion that a real angel would turn up some day. You see, I never cared much for women. Bad as my mother was as far as being what you might call a parent went, she had something in her looks and manners that gave me a better idea of what a nice woman was like than I had of most things; and the girls I met in Australia and America seemed very small potatoes to me in comparison with her. Besides, of course they were not ladies. I was fond of Mrs. Skene because she was good to me; and I made myself agreeable, for her sake, to the girls that came to see her; but in reality I couldn't stand them. Mrs. Skene said that they were all setting their caps at me

—women are death on a crack fighter—but the more they tried it on the less I liked them. It was no go; I could get on with the men well enough, no matter how common they were; but the snobbishness of my breed came out with regard to the women. When I saw you that day at Wiltstoken walk out of the trees and stand looking so quietly at me and Mellish, and then go back out of sight without a word, I'm blessed if I didn't think you were the angel come at last. Then I met you at the railway station and walked with you. You put the angel out of my head quick enough; for an angel, after all, is only a shadowy, childish notion—I believe it's all gammon about there being any in heaven—but you gave me a better idea than mamma of what a woman should be, and you came up to that idea and went beyond it. I have been in love with you ever since; and if I can't have you, I don't care what becomes of me. I know I am a bad lot, and have always been one; but when I saw you taking pleasure in the society of fellows just as bad as myself, I didn't see why I should keep away when I was dying to come. I am no worse than the dog-baker, any how. And hang it, Miss Lydia, I don't want to brag; but I never fought a cross or struck a foul blow in my life; and I have never been beaten, though I'm only a middle-weight, and have stood up with the best fourteen-stone men in the Colonies, the States, or in England."

Cashel ceased. As he sat eying her wistfully, Lydia, who had been perfectly still, said musingly,

"Strange! that I should be so much more prejudiced than I knew. What will you think of me when I tell you that your profession does not seem half so shocking now that I know you to be the son of an artist, and not a journeyman butcher or a laborer, as my cousin told me."

"What!" exclaimed Cashel. "That lantern-jawed fellow told you I was a butcher!"

"I did not mean to betray him; but, as I have already said, I am bad at keeping secrets. Mr. Lucian Webber is my cousin and friend, and has done me many services. May I rest assured that he has nothing to fear from you?"

"He has no right to tell lies about me. He is sweet on you, too: I twigged that at Wiltstoken. I have a good mind to let him know whether I am a butcher or not."

"He did not say so. What he told me of you, as far as it went, is exactly confirmed by what you have said yourself. But I happened to ask him to what class men of your calling usually belonged; and he said that they were laborers, butchers, and so forth. Do you resent that?"

"I see plainly enough that you won't let me resent it. I should like to know what else he said of me. But he was right enough about the butchers. There are all sorts of blackguards in the ring: there's no use in denying it. Since it's been made illegal, decent men won't go into it. But, all the same, it's not the fighting men, but the betting men, that bring discredit on it. I wish your cousin had held his confounded tongue."

"I wish you had forestalled him by telling me the truth."

"I wish I had, now. But what's the use of wishing? I didn't dare run the chance of losing you. See how soon you forbade me the house when you did find out."

"It made little difference," said Lydia, gravely.

"You were always friendly to me," said Cashel, plaintively.

"More so than you were to me. You should not have deceived me. And now I think we had better part. I am glad to know your history; and I admit that when you embraced your profession you made perhaps the best choice that society offered you. I do not blame you."

"But you give me the sack. Is that it?"

"What do you propose, Mr. Cashel Byron? Is it to visit my house in the intervals of battering and maiming butchers and laborers?"

"No, it's not," retorted Cashel. "You're very aggravating. I won't stay much longer in the ring now, because my luck is too good to last. I shall have to retire soon, luck or no luck, because no one can match me. Even now there's nobody except Bill Paradise that pretends to be able for me; and I'll settle him in September if he really means business. After that, I'll retire. I expect to be worth ten thousand pounds then. Ten thousand pounds, I'm told, is the same as five hundred a year. Well, I suppose, judging from the style you keep here, that you're worth as much more, besides your place in the country; so, if you will marry me, we shall have a thousand a year between us. I don't know much of money matters; but at any rate we can live like fighting-cocks on that much. That's a straight and business-like proposal, isn't it?"

"And if I refuse?" said Lydia, with some sternness.

"Then you may have the ten thousand pounds to do what you like with," said Cashel, despairingly. "It won't matter what becomes of me. I won't go to the devil for you or any woman if I can help it; and I—but where's the good of saying *if* you refuse. I know I don't express myself properly; I'm a bad hand at sentimentality; but if I had as much gab as a poet, I couldn't be any fonder of you, or think more highly of you."

"But you are mistaken as to the amount of my income."

"That doesn't matter a bit. If you have more, why, the more the merrier. If you have less, or if you have to give up all your property when you're married, I will soon make another ten thousand to supply the loss. Only give me one good word, and, by George, I'll fight the seven champions of Christendom, one down and t'other come on, for five thousand a side each. Hang the money!"

"I am richer than you suppose," said Lydia, unmoved. "I cannot tell you exactly how much I possess; but my income is about forty thousand pounds."

"Forty thousand pounds!" ejaculated Cashel.

"Holy Moses! I didn't think the queen had so much as that."

He paused a moment, and became very red. Then, in a voice broken by mortification, he said, "I see I have been making a fool of myself," and took his hat and turned to go.

"It does not follow that you should go at once without a word," said Lydia, betraying nervousness for the first time during the interview.

"Oh, that's all rot," said Cashel. "I may be a fool while my eyes are shut, but I'm sensible enough when they're open. I have no business here. I wish to the Lord I had stayed in Australia."

"Perhaps it would have been better," said Lydia, troubled. "But since we have met, it is useless to deplore it; and— Let me remind you of one thing. You have pointed out to me that I have made friends of men whose pursuits are no better than yours. I do not wholly admit that; but there is one respect in which they are on the same footing as you. They are all, as far as worldly gear is concerned, much poorer than I. Many of them, I fear, are much poorer than you are."

Cashel looked up quickly with returning hope; but it lasted only a moment. He shook his head dejectedly.

"I am at least grateful to you," she continued, "because you have sought me for my own sake, knowing nothing of my wealth."

"I should think not," groaned Cashel. "Your wealth may be a very fine thing for the other fellows; and I'm glad you have it, for your own sake. But it's a settler for me. It's knocked me out of time, so it has. I sha'n't come up again; and the sooner the sponge is chucked up in my corner, the better. So good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Lydia, almost as pale as he had now become, "since you will have it so."

"Since the devil will have it so," said Cashel, ruefully. "It's no use wishing to have it any other way. The luck is against me. I hope, Miss Carew, that you'll excuse me for making such an ass of myself. It's all my blessed innocence; I never was taught any better."

"I have no quarrel with you except on the old score of hiding the truth from me; and that I forgive you —as far as the evil of it affects me. As for your declaration of attachment to me personally, I have received many similar ones that have flattered me less. But there are certain scruples between us. You will not court a woman a hundred-fold richer than yourself; and I will not entertain a prize-fighter. My wealth frightens every man who is not a knave; and your profession frightens every woman who is not a fury."

"Then you— Just tell me this," said Cashel, eagerly. "Suppose I were a rich swell, and were not a—"

"No," said Lydia, peremptorily interrupting him. "I will suppose nothing but what is."

Cashel relapsed into melancholy. "If you only hadn't been kind to me!" he said. "I think the reason I love you so much is that you're the only person that is not afraid of me. Other people are civil because they daren't be otherwise to the cock of the ring. It's a lonely thing to be a champion. You knew nothing about that; and you knew I was afraid of you; and yet you were as good as gold."

"It is also a lonely thing to be a very rich woman. People are afraid of my wealth, and of what they call my learning. We two have at least one experience in common. Now do me a great favor, by going. We have nothing further to say."

"I'll go in two seconds. But I don't believe much in *your* being lonely. That's only fancy."

"Perhaps so. Most feelings of this kind are only fancies."

There was a pause. Then Cashel said,

"I don't feel half so downhearted as I did a minute ago. Are you sure that you're not angry with me?"

"Quite sure. Pray let me say good-bye."

"And may I never see you again? Never at all? —world without end, amen?"

"Never as the famous prize-fighter. But if a day should come when Mr. Cashel Byron will be something better worthy of his birth and nature, I will not forget an old friend. Are you satisfied now?"

Cashel's face began to glow, and the roots of his hair to tingle. "One thing more," he said. "If you meet me by chance in the street before that, will you give me a look? I don't ask for a regular bow, but just a look to keep me going?"

"I have no intention of cutting you," said Lydia, gravely. "But do not place yourself purposely in my way."

"Honor bright, I won't. I'll content myself with walking through that street in Soho occasionally. Now I'm off; I know you're in a hurry to be rid of me. So good-b— Stop a bit, though. Perhaps when that time you spoke of comes, you will be married."

"It is possible; but I am not likely to marry. How many more things have you to say that you have no right to say?"

"Not one," said Cashel, with a laugh that rang through the house. "I never was happier in my life, though I'm crying inside all the time. I'll have a try for you yet. Good-bye. No," he added, turning from her proffered hand; "I daren't touch it; I should eat you afterwards." And he ran out of the room.

In the hall was Bashville, pale and determined, waiting there to rush to the assistance of his mistress at her first summons. He had a poker concealed at hand. Having just heard a great laugh, and seeing Cashel come down-stairs in high spirits, he stood stock-still, and did not know what to think.

"Well, old chap," said Cashel, boisterously, slapping him on the shoulder, "so you're alive yet. Is there any one in the dining-room?"

"No," said Bashville.

"There's a thick carpet there to fall soft on," said Cashel, pulling Bashville into the room. "Come along. Now, show me that little trick of yours again.

Come, don't be afraid. Down with me. Take care you don't knock my head against the fire-irons."

"But—"

"But be hanged. You were spry enough at it before. Come!"

Bashville, after a moment's hesitation, seized Cashel, who immediately became grave and attentive, and remained imperturbably so while Bashville expertly threw him. He sat for a moment thinking on the hearth-rug before he rose. "*I* see," he said, then, getting up. "Now, do it again."

"But it makes such a row," remonstrated Bashville.

"Only once more. There'll be no row this time."

"Well, you *are* an original sort of cove," said Bashville, complying. But instead of throwing his man, he found himself wedged into a collar formed by Cashel's arms, the least constriction of which would have strangled him. Cashel again roared with laughter as he released him.

"That's the way, ain't it?" he said. "You can't catch an old fox twice in the same trap. Do you know any more falls?"

"I do," said Bashville; "but I really can't show them to you here. I shall get into trouble on account of the noise."

"You can come down to me whenever you have an evening out," said Cashel, handing him a card, "to that address, and show me what you know, and I'll see what I can do with you. There's the making of a man in you."

"You're very kind," said Bashville, pocketing the card with a grin.

"And now let me give you a word of advice that will be of use to you as long as you live," said Cashel, impressively. "You did a very silly thing to-day. You threw a man down—a fighting-man—and then stood looking at him like a fool, waiting for him to get up and kill you. If ever you do that again, fall on him as heavily as you can the instant he's off his legs. Drop your shoulder well into him, and, if he pulls you over, make play with the back of your head. If he's altogether too big for you, put your knee on his throat as if by accident. But, on no account, stand and do nothing. It's flying in the face of Providence."

Cashel emphasized these counsels by taps of his forefinger on one of Bashville's buttons. In conclusion, he nodded, opened the house-door, and walked away in buoyant spirits.

Lydia, standing near the library window, saw him pass, and observed how his light, alert step and a certain gamesome assurance of manner marked him off from a genteelly promenading middle-aged gentleman, a trudging workman, and a vigorously striding youth who were also passing by. The iron railings through which she saw him reminded her of the admirable and dangerous creatures which were passing and repassing behind iron bars in the park yonder. But she exulted, in her quiet manner, in the thought that, dangerous as he was, she had no fear of him. When his cabman had found him and driven him off she went to her desk, opened a private drawer in it, took out her father's last letter, and sat for some time looking at it without unfolding it.

"It would be a strange thing, father," she said, as if he were actually there to hear her, "if your paragon should turn aside from her friends, the artists, philosophers, and statesmen, to give herself to an illiterate prize-fighter. I felt a pang of absolute despair when he replied to my forty thousand pounds a year with an unanswerable good-bye."

She locked up her father, as it were, in the drawer again, and rang the bell. Bashville appeared, somewhat perturbed.

"If Mr. Byron calls again, admit him if I am at home."

"Yes, madam."

"Thank you."

"Begging your pardon, madam, but may I ask has any complaint been made of me?"

"None." Bashville was reluctantly withdrawing when she added, "Mr. Byron gave me to understand that you tried to prevent his entrance by force. You exposed yourself to needless risk by doing so; and you may make a rule in future that when people are importunate, and will not go away when asked, they had better come in until you get special instructions from me. I am not finding fault; on the contrary, I approve of your determination to carry out your orders; but under exceptional circumstances you may use your own discretion."

"He shoved the door into my face, and I acted on the impulse of the moment, madam. I hope you will forgive the liberty I took in locking the door of the boudoir. He is older and heavier than I am, madam; and he has the advantage of being a professional. Else I should have stood my ground."

"I am quite satisfied," said Lydia, a little coldly, as she left the room.

"How long you have been!" cried Alice, almost in hysterics, as Lydia entered. "Is he gone? What were those dreadful noises? *Is* anything the matter?"

"Dancing and late hours are the matter," said Lydia, coolly. "The season is proving too much for you, Alice."

"It is not the season; it is the man," said Alice, with a sob.

"Indeed? I have been in conversation with the man for more than half an hour; and Bashville has been in actual combat with him; yet we are not in hysterics. You have been sitting here at your ease, have you not?"

"I am not in hysterics," said Alice, indignantly.

"So much the better," said Lydia, gravely, placing her hand on the forehead of Alice, who subsided with a sniff.

CHAPTER X

Mrs. Byron, under her stage name of Adelaide Gisborne, was now, for the second time in her career, much talked of in London, where she had been for many years almost forgotten. The metropolitan managers of her own generation had found that her success in new parts was very uncertain; that she was more capricious than the most petted favorites of the public; and that her invariable reply to a business proposal was that she detested the stage, and was resolved never to set foot upon it again. So they had managed to do without her for so long that the younger London playgoers knew her by reputation only as an old-fashioned actress who wandered through the provinces palming herself off on the ignorant inhabitants as a great artist, and boring them with performances of the plays of Shakespeare. It suited Mrs. Byron well to travel with the nucleus of a dramatic company from town to town, staying a fortnight in each, and repeating half a dozen characters in which she was very effective, and which she knew so well that she never thought about them except when, as indeed often happened, she had nothing else to think about. Most of the provincial populations received her annual visits with enthusiasm. Among them she found herself more excitingly applauded before the curtain, her authority more despotic behind it, her expenses smaller, and her gains greater than in London, for which she accordingly cared as little as London cared for her. As she grew older she made more money and spent less. When she complained to Cashel of the cost of his education, she was rich. Since he had relieved her of that cost she had visited America, Egypt, India, and the colonies, and had grown constantly richer. From this great tour she had returned to England on the day when Cashel added the laurels of the Flying Dutchman to his trophies ; and the next Sunday's paper had its sporting column full of the prowess of Cashel Byron, and its theatrical column full of the genius of Adelaide Gisborne. But she never read sporting columns, nor he theatrical ones.

The managers who had formerly avoided Mrs. Byron were by this time dead, bankrupt, or engaged in less hazardous pursuits. One of their successors had lately restored Shakespeare to popularity as signally as Cashel had restored the prize ring. He was anxious to produce the play of "King John," being desirous of appearing as Faulconbridge, a part for which he was physically unfitted. Though he had no suspicion of his unfitness, he was awake to the fact that the favorite London actresses, though admirable in modern comedy, were not mistresses of what he called, after Sir Walter Scott, the "big bow wow" style required for the part of Lady Constance in Shakespeare's history. He knew that he could find in the provinces many veteran players who knew every gesture and inflection of voice associated by tradition with the part; but he was afraid that they would remind Londoners of Richardson's show, and get Faulconbridge laughed at. Then he thought of Adelaide Gisborne. For some hours after the idea came to him he was gnawed at by the fear that her performance would throw his into the shade. But his confidence in his own popularity helped his love of good acting to prevail; and he made the newly returned actress a tempting offer, instigating some journalist friends of his at the same time to lament over the decay of the grand school of acting, and to invent or republish anecdotes of Mrs. Siddons.

This time Mrs. Byron said nothing about detesting the stage. She had really detested it once; but by the time she was rich enough to give up the theatre she had worn that feeling out, and had formed a habit of acting which was as irksome to shake off as any other habit. She also found a certain satisfaction in making money with ease and certainty; and she made so much that at last she began to trifle with plans of retirement, of playing in Paris, of taking a theatre in London, and other whims. The chief public glory of her youth had been a sudden triumph in London on the occasion of her first appearance on any stage; and she now felt a mind to repeat this and crown her career where it had begun. So she accepted the manager's offer, and even went the length of reading the play of "King John" in order to ascertain what it was all about.

The work of advertisement followed her assent. Portraits of Adelaide Gisborne were displayed throughout the town. Paragraphs in the papers mentioned large sums as the cost of mounting the historical masterpiece of the national bard. All the available seats in the theatre—except some six or seven hundred in the pit and gallery—were said to be already disposed of for the first month of the expected run of the performance. The prime minister promised to be present on the opening night. Absolute archæologic accuracy was promised. Old paintings were compared to ascertain the dresses of the period. A scene into which the artist had incautiously painted a pointed arch was condemned as an anachronism. Many noblemen gave the actor-manager access to their collections of armor and weapons in order that his accoutrement should exactly counterfeit that of a Norman baron. Nothing remained doubtful except the quality of the acting.

It happened that one of the most curious documents of the period in question was a scrap of vellum containing a fragment of a chronicle of Prince Arthur, with an illuminated portrait of his mother. It had been purchased for a trifling sum by the late Mr. Carew, and was now in the possession of Lydia, to whom the actor-manager applied for leave to inspect it. Leave being readily given, he visited the house in Regent's Park, which he declared to be an inexhaustible storehouse of treasure. He deeply regretted, he said, that he could not show the portrait to Miss Gisborne. Lydia replied that if Miss Gisborne would come and look at it, she should be very welcome. Two days later, at noon, Mrs. Byron arrived and found Lydia alone; Alice having contrived to be out, as she felt that it was better not to meet an actress—one could never tell what they might have been.

The years that had elapsed since Mrs. Byron's visit to Dr. Moncrief had left no perceptible trace on her; indeed she looked younger now than on that occasion, because she had been at the trouble of putting on an artificial complexion. Her careless refinement of manner was so different from the studied dignity and anxious courtesy of the actor-manager, that Lydia could hardly think of them as belonging to the same profession. Her voice was not her stage voice; it gave a subtle charm to her most commonplace remarks, and it was as different as possible from Cashel's rough tones. Yet Lydia was convinced by the first note of it that she was Cashel's mother. Besides, their eyes were so like that they might have made an exchange without altering their appearance.

Mrs. Byron, coming to the point without delay, at once asked to see the drawing. Lydia brought her to the library, were several portfolios were ready for inspection. The precious fragment of vellum was uppermost.

"Very interesting, indeed," said Mrs. Byron, throwing it aside after one glance at it, and turning over some later prints, while Lydia, amused, looked on in silence. "Ah," she said, presently, "here is something that will suit me exactly. I shall not trouble to go through the rest of your collection, thank you. They must do that robe for me in violet silk. What is your opinion of it, Miss Carew? I have noticed, from one or two trifles, that your taste is exquisite."

"For what character do you intend the dress?"

"Constance, in 'King John.'"

"But silk was not made in western Europe until three hundred years after Constance's death. And that drawing is a sketch of Marie de Medicis by Rubens."

"Never mind," said Mrs. Byron, smoothly. "What does a dress three hundred years out of date matter when the woman inside it is seven hundred years out? What can be a greater anachronism than the death of Prince Arthur three months hence on the stage of the Panopticon Theatre? I am an artist giving life to a character in romance, I suppose; certainly not a grown-up child playing at being somebody out of Mrs. Markham's history of England. I wear whatever becomes me. I cannot act when I feel dowdy."

"But what will the manager say?"

"I doubt if he will say anything. He will hardly venture to press on me anything copied from that old parchment. As he will wear a suit of armor obviously made the other day in Birmingham, why—!" Mrs. Byron shrugged her shoulders, and did not take sufficient interest in the manager's opinion to finish her sentence.

"After all, Shakespeare concerned himself very little about such matters," said Lydia, conversationally.

"No doubt. I seldom read him."

"Is this part of Lady Constance a favorite one of yours?"

"Troublesome, my dear," said Mrs. Byron, absently. "The men look ridiculous in it; and it does not draw."

"No doubt," said Lydia, watching her face. "But I spoke rather of your personal feeling towards the character. Do you, for instance, like portraying maternal tenderness on the stage?"

"Maternal tenderness," said Mrs. Byron with sudden nobleness, "is far too sacred a thing to be mimicked. Have you any children?"

"No," said Lydia, demurely. "I am not married."

"Of course not. You should get married. Maternity is a liberal education in itself."

"Do you think that it suits every woman?"

"Undoubtedly. Without exception. Only think, dear Miss Carew, of the infinite patience with which you must tend a child, of the necessity of seeing with its little eyes and with your own wise ones at the same time, of bearing without reproach the stabs it innocently inflicts, of forgiving its hundred little selfishnesses, of living in continual fear of wounding its exquisite sensitiveness, or rousing its bitter resentment of injustice and caprice. Think of how you must watch yourself, check yourself, exercise and develop everything in you that can help to attract and retain the most jealous love in the world! Believe me, it is a priceless trial to be a mother. It is a royal compensation for having been born a woman."

"Nevertheless," said Lydia, "I wish I had been born a man. Since you seem to have thought deeply into these problems, I will venture to ask you a question. Do you not think that the acquirement of an art demanding years of careful self-study and training—such as yours, for example—is also of great educational value? Almost a sufficient discipline to make one a good mother?"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Byron, decidedly. "People come into the world ready-made. I went on the stage when I was eighteen, and succeeded at once. Had I known anything of the world, or been four years older, I should have been weak, awkward, timid, and flat; it would have taken me twelve years to crawl to the front. But I was young, passionate, beautiful, and indeed terrible; for I had run away from home two years before, and been cruelly deceived. I learned the business of the stage as easily and thoughtlessly as a child learns a prayer; the rest came to me by nature. I have seen others spend years in struggling with bad voices, uncouth figures, and diffidence; besides a dozen defects that existed only in their imaginations. Their struggles may have educated them; but had they possessed sufficient genius they would have had neither struggle nor education. Perhaps that is why geniuses are such erratic people, and mediocrities so respectable. I grant you that I was very limited when I first came out; I was absolutely incapable of comedy. But I never took any trouble about it; and by and by, when I began to mature a little, and to see the absurdity of most of the things I had been making a fuss about, comedy came to me unsought, as romantic tragedy had come before. I suppose it would have come just the same if I had been laboring to acquire it, except that I would have attributed its arrival to my own exertions. Most of the laborious people think they have made themselves what they are—much as if a child should think it had made itself grow."

"You are the first artist I ever met," said Lydia, "who did not claim art as the most laborious of all avocations. They all deny the existence of genius, and attribute everything to work."

"Of course one picks up a great deal from experience; and there is plenty of work on the stage. But it is my genius which enables me to pick up things, and to work on the stage instead of in a kitchen or laundry."

"You must be very fond of your profession."

"I do not mind it now; I have shrunk to fit it. I began because I couldn't help myself; and I go on because, being an old woman, I have nothing else to do. Bless me, how I hated it after the first month! I must retire soon, now. People are growing weary of me."

"I doubt that. I am bound to assume that you are an old woman, since you say so; but you must be aware, flattery apart, that you hardly seem to have reached your prime yet."

"I might be your mother, my dear. I might be a grandmother. Perhaps I am." There was a plaintive tone in the last sentence; and Lydia seized the opportunity.

"You spoke of maternity then from experience, Miss Gisborne?"

"I have one son—a son who was sent to me in my eighteenth year."

"I hope he inherits his mother's genius and personal grace."

"I am sure I don't know," said Mrs. Byron, pensively. "He was a perfect devil. I fear I shock you, Miss Carew; but really I did everything for him that the most devoted mother could do; and yet he ran away from me without making a sign of farewell. Little wretch!"

"Boys do cruel things sometimes in a spirit of adventure," said Lydia, watching her visitor's face narrowly.

"It was not that. It was his temper, which was ungovernable. He was sulky and vindictive. It is quite impossible to love a sulky child. I kept him constantly near me when he was a tiny creature; and when he got too big for that I spent oceans of money on his education. All in vain! He never showed any feeling towards me except a sense of injury that no kindness could remove. And he had nothing to complain of. Never was there a worse son."

Lydia remained silent and grave. Mrs. Byron looked rather beside her than at her. Suddenly she added,

"My poor, darling Cashel" (Lydia suppressed a start), "what a shame to talk of you so! You see, I love him in spite of his wickedness." Mrs. Byron took out her handkerchief, and Lydia for a moment was alarmed by the prospect of tears. But Miss Gisborne only blew her nose with perfect composure, and rose to take her leave. Lydia, who, apart from her interest in Cashel's mother, was attracted and amused by the woman herself, induced her to stay for luncheon, and presently discovered from her conversation that she had read much romance of the Werther sort in her youth, and had, since then, employed her leisure in reading every book that came in her way without regard to its quality. Her acquirements were so odd, and her character so unreasonable, that Lydia, whose knowledge was unusually well organized, and who was eminently reasonable, concluded that she was a woman of genius. For Lydia knew the vanity of her own attainments, and believed herself to be merely a patient and well-taught plodder. Mrs. Byron happening to be pleased with the house, the luncheon, and Lydia's intelligent listening, her unaccountable natural charm became so intensified by her good-humor that Lydia became conscious of it, and began to wonder what its force might have been if some influence—that of a lover, for instance—had ever made Mrs. Byron ecstatically happy. She surprised herself at last in the act of speculating whether she could ever make Cashel love her as his father must, for a time at least, have loved her visitor.

When Lydia was alone, she considered whether she was justified in keeping Mrs. Byron apart from her son. It seemed plain that at present Cashel was a disgrace to his mother, and had better remain hidden from her. But if he should for any reason abandon his ruffianly pursuits, as she had urged him to do, then she could bring about a meeting between them;

and the truant's mother might take better care of him in the future, besides making him pecuniarily independent of prize-fighting. This led Lydia to ask what new profession Cashel could adopt, and what likelihood there was of his getting on with his mother any better than formerly. No satisfactory answer was forthcoming. So she went back to the likelihood of his reforming himself for her sake. On this theme her imagination carried her so far from all reasonable probability, that she was shaking her head at her own folly when Bashville appeared and announced Lord Worthington, who came into the room with Alice. Lydia had not seen him since her discovery of the true position of the tenant he had introduced to her, and he was consequently a little afraid to meet her. To cover his embarrassment, he began to talk quickly on a number of commonplace topics. But when some time had elapsed, he began to show signs of fresh uneasiness. He looked at his watch, and said,

"I don't wish to hurry you, ladies; but this affair commences at three."

"What affair?" said Lydia, who had been privately wondering why he had come.

"The assault-at-arms. King What's-his-name's affair. Webber told me he had arranged that you should come with me."

"Oh, you have come to take us there. I had forgotten. Did I promise to go?"

"Webber said so. He was to have taken you himself; but, failing that, he promised to do a good thing for me and put me in his place. He said you particularly wanted to go, hang him!"

Lydia then rose promptly and sent for her carriage. "There is no hurry," she said. "We can drive to St. James's Hall in twelve minutes."

"But we have to go to Islington, to the Agricultural Hall. There will be cavalry charges, and all sorts of fun."

"Bless me!" said Lydia. "Will there be any boxing?"

"Yes," said Lord Worthington, reddening, but unabashed. "Lots of it. It will be by gentlemen, though, except perhaps one bout to show the old king our professional form."

"Then excuse me while I go for my hat," said Lydia, leaving the room. Alice had gone some time before to make a complete change in her dress, as the occasion was one for display of that kind.

"You look awfully fetching, Miss Goff," Lord Worthington said, as he followed them to the carriage. Alice did not deign to reply, but tossed her head superbly, and secretly considered whether people would, on comparison, think her overdressed or Lydia underdressed. Lord Worthington thought they both looked their best, and reflected for several seconds on the different styles of different women, and how what would suit one would not do at all for another. It seemed to him that Miss Carew's presence made him philosophical.

The Agricultural Hall struck Alice at first sight as an immense barn round which heaps of old packingcases had been built into race-course stands, scantily decorated with red cloth and a few flags. She was conducted to a front seat in one of these balconies, which overhung the tan-strewn arena. Just below her were the palisades, ornamented at intervals with evergreens in tubs, and pressed against from without by a crowd who had paid a shilling apiece for the privilege of admission. She remarked that it was little to the credit of the management that these people should be placed so close beneath her that she could hear their conversation; but as Lydia did not seem to share her disgust, she turned her attention to the fashionable part of the audience. On the opposite side of the arena the balconies seemed like beds of flowers in bloom, blacknesses formed here and there by the hats and coats of gentlemen representing the interspaces of clay. In the midst of the flowers was a gaudy dais, on which a powerfully-built black gentleman sat in a raised chair, his majestic impassivity contrasting with the overt astonishment with which a row of savagely ugly attendant chiefs grinned and gaped on either side of him.

"What a pity we are not nearer the king!" said Alice. "I can hardly see the dear old fellow."

"You will find these the best seats for seeing the assault. It will be all right," said Lord Worthington.

Lydia's attention was caught by something guilty in his manner. Following a furtive glance of his, she saw in the arena, not far from her, an enclosure about twenty feet square, made with ropes and stakes. It was unoccupied, and there were a few chairs, a basin, and a sponge, near it.

"What is that?" she asked.

"That! Oh, that's the ring."

"It is not a ring. It is square."

"They call it the ring. They have succeeded in squaring the circle."

Here there was a piercing bugle-call, and a troop of cavalry trotted into the arena. Lydia found it pleasant enough to sit lazily admiring the horses and men, and comparing the members of the Olympian Club, who appeared when the soldiers retired, to the marble gods of Athens, and to the Bacchus or David of Michael Angelo. They fell short of the Greek statues in refinement, and of the Italian in impressiveness as they vaulted over a wooden horse, and swung upon horizontal bars, each cheapening the exploits of his forerunner by out-doing them. Lord Worthington, who soon grew tired of this, whispered that when all that rubbish was over, a fellow would cut a sheep in two with a sword, after which there would be some boxing.

"Do you mean to say," said Lydia, indignantly, "that they are going to turn a sheep loose and hunt it on horseback with swords?"

Lord Worthington laughed and said yes; but it presently appeared that by a sheep was meant a lean carcass of mutton. A stalwart sergeant cut it in half as a climax to slicing lemons, bars of lead, and silk handkerchiefs; and the audience, accustomed to see much more disgusting sights in butchers' shops, liberally applauded him.

Two gentlemen of the Olympian Club now entered the enclosure which Lord Worthington called the ring. After shaking hands with one another as well as their huge padded gloves permitted, they hugged themselves with their right arms as if there were some danger of their stomachs falling out if not held tightly in, and danced round one another, throwing out and retracting their left fists like pawing horses. They were both, as Lydia learned from the announcement of their names and achievements by the master of the ceremonies, amateur champions. She thought their pawing and dancing ridiculous; and when they occasionally rushed together and scuffled, she could distinguish nothing of the leading off, stopping, ducking, countering, guarding, and getting away to which Lord Worthington enthusiastically invited her attention, and which elicited alternate jeers and applause from the shilling audience below. She laughed outright when, at the expiration of three minutes, the two dropped supine into chairs at opposite corners of the ring as if they had sustained excessive fatigue. At the end of a minute, some one hoarsely cried "Time!" and they rose and repeated their previous performance for three minutes more. Another minute of rest followed; and then the dancing and pawing proceeded for four minutes, after which the champions again shook hands and left the arena.

"And is that all?" said Lydia.

"That's all," said Lord Worthington. "It's the most innocent thing in the world, and the prettiest."

"It does not strike me as being pretty," said Lydia;

"but it seems as innocent as inanity can make it." Her mind misgave her that she had ignorantly and unjustly reproached Cashel Byron with ferocity merely because he practised this harmless exercise.

The show progressed through several phases of skilled violence. Besides single combats between men armed in various fashions, there were tilts, tent-peggings, drilling and singlestick practice by squads of British tars, who were loudly cheered, and more boxing and vaulting by members of the club. Lydia's attention soon began to wander from the arena. Looking down at the crowd outside the palisades, she saw a small man whom she vaguely remembered, though his face was turned from her. In conversation with him was a powerful man dressed in a yellow tweed suit and green scarf. He had a coarse, strong voice, and his companion a shrill, mean one, so that their remarks could be heard by an attentive listener above the confused noise of the crowd.

"Do you admire that man?" said Lord Worthington, following Lydia's gaze.

"No. Is he anybody in particular?"

"He was a great man once—in the days of the giants. He was champion of England. He has a special interest for us as the preceptor of a mutual friend of ours."

"Please name him," said Lydia, intending that the mutual friend should be named.

"Ned Skene," said Lord Worthington, taking her to mean the man below. "He has done so well in the colonies that he has indulged himself and his family with a trip to England. His arrival made quite a sensation in this country: last week he had a crowded benefit, at which he sparred with our mutual friend and knocked him about like a baby. Our mutual behaved very well on the occasion in letting himself be knocked about. You see he could have killed old Skene if he had tried in earnest."

"Is that Skene?" said Lydia, looking at him with an earnest interest that astonished Lord Worthington. "Ah! Now I recognize the man with him. He is one of my tenants at the Warren Lodge—I believe I am indebted to you for the introduction."

"Mellish the trainer?" said Lord Worthington, looking a little foolish. "So it is. What a lovely bay that lancer has!—the second from the far end."

But Lydia would not look at the lancer's horse. "Paradise!" she heard Skene exclaim just then with scornful incredulity. "Ain't it likely?" It occurred to her that if he was alluding to his own chance of arriving there, it was not likely.

"Less likely things have happened," said Mellish. "I won't say that Cashel Byron is getting stale; but I will say that his luck is too good to last; and I know for a fact that he's gone quite melancholy of late."

"Melancholy be blowed!" said Skene. "What should he go melancholy for?"

"Oh, *I* know," said Mellish, reticently.

"You know a lot," retorted Skene with contempt. "I s'pose you mean the young 'oman he's always talking to my missis about."

"I mean a young woman that he ain't likely to get.

One of the biggest swells in England—a little un with a face like the inside of a oyster-shell, that he met down at Wiltstoken, where I trained him to fight the Flying Dutchman. He went right off his training after he met her—wouldn't do anything I told him. I made so cock-sure that he'd be licked that I hedged every penny I had laid on him except twenty pound that I got a flat to bet agin him down at the fight after I had changed my mind. Curse that woman! I lost a hundred pound by her."

"And served you right, too, you old stupid. You was wrong then; and you're wrong now, with your blessed Paradise."

"Paradise has never been licked yet."

"No more has my boy."

"Well, we'll see."

"We'll see! I tell you I've seed for myself. I've seed Billy Paradise spar; and it ain't fighting, it's ruffianing: that's what it is. Ruffianing! Why, my old missis has more science."

"Mebbe she has," said Mellish. "But look at the men he's licked that were chock full of science. Shepstone, clever as he is, only won a fight from him by claiming a foul, because Billy lost his temper and spiked him. That's the worst of Billy; he can't keep his feelings in. But no fine-lady sparrer can stand afore that ugly rush of his. Do you think he'll care for Cashel's showy long shots? Not he: he'll just take 'em on that mahogany nut of his, and give him back one o' them smashers that he settled poor Dick Weeks with."

"I'll lay you any money he don't. If he does, I'll go back into the ring myself, and bust his head off for it." Here Skene, very angry, applied several epithets to Paradise, and became so excited that Mellish had to soothe him by partially retracting his forebodings, and asking how Cashel had been of late.

"He's not been taking care of himself as he oughter," said Skene, gloomily. "He's showing the London fashions to the missis and Fanny—they're here in the three-and-sixpenny seats, among the swells. Theatres every night; and walks every day to see the queen drive through the park, or the like. My Fan likes to have him with her on account of his being such a gentleman: she don't hardly think her own father not good enough to walk down Piccadilly with. Wants me to put on a black coat and make a parson of myself. The missis just idolizes him. She thinks the boy far too good for the young 'oman you was speaking of, and tells him that she's only letting on not to care for him to raise her price, just as I used to pretend to be getting beat, to set the flats betting agin me. The women always made a pet of him. In Melbourne it was not what *I* liked for dinner: it was always what the boy 'ud like, and when it 'ud please him to have it. I'm blest if I usen't to have to put him up to ask for a thing when I wanted it myself. And you tell me that that's the lad that's going to let Billy Paradise lick him, I s'pose. Walker!"

Lydia, with Mrs. Byron's charm fresh upon her, wondered what manner of woman this Mrs. Skene could be who had supplanted her in the affections of her son, and yet was no more than a prize-fighter's old missis. Evidently she was not one to turn a young man from a career in the ring. Again the theme of Cashel's occupation and the chances of his quitting it ran away with Lydia's attention. She sat with her eyes fixed on the arena, without seeing the soldiers, swordsmen, or athletes who were busy there; her mind wandered further and further from the place; and the chattering of the people resolved itself into a distant hum and was forgotten.

Suddenly she saw a dreadful-looking man coming towards her across the arena. His face had the surface and color of blue granite; his protruding jaws and retreating forehead were like those of an orang-outang. She started from her reverie with a shiver, and, recovering her hearing as well as her vision of external things, became conscious of an attempt to applaud this apparition by a few persons below. The man grinned ferociously, placed one hand on a stake of the ring, and vaulted over the ropes. Lydia now remarked that, excepting his hideous head and enormous hands and feet, he was a well-made man, with loins and shoulders that shone in the light, and gave him an air of great strength and activity.

"Ain't he a picture?" she heard Mellish exclaim, ecstatically. "There's condition for you!"

"Ah!" said Skene, disparagingly. "But ain't *he* the gentleman! Just look at him. It's like the Prince of Wales walking down Pall Mall."

Lydia, hearing this, looked again, and saw Cashel Byron, exactly as she had seen him for the first time in the elm vista at Wiltstoken, approaching the ring with the indifferent air of a man going through some tedious public ceremony.

"A god coming down to compete with a gladiator," whispered Lord Worthington, eagerly. "Isn't it, Miss Carew? Apollo and the satyr! You must admit that our mutual friend is a splendid-looking fellow. If he could go into society like that, by Jove, the women—"

"Hush," said Lydia, as if his words were intolerable.

Cashel did not vault over the ropes. He stepped through them languidly, and, rejecting the proffered assistance of a couple of officious friends, drew on a boxing-glove fastidiously, like an exquisite preparing for a fashionable promenade. Having thus muffled his left hand so as to make it useless for the same service to his right, he dipped his fingers into the other glove, gripped it between his teeth, and dragged it on with the action of a tiger tearing its prey. Lydia shuddered again.

"Bob Mellish," said Skene, "I'll lay you twenty to one he stops that rush that you think so much of. Come: twenty to one!"

Mellish shook his head. Then the master of the ceremonies, pointing to the men in succession, shouted, "Paradise: a professor. Cashel Byron: a professor. Time!"

Cashel now looked at Paradise, of whose existence he had not before seemed to be aware. The two men advanced towards the centre of the ring, shook hands at arm's-length, cast off each other's grasp suddenly, fell back a step, and began to move warily round one another from left to right like a pair of panthers.

"I think they might learn manners from the gentlemen, and shake hands cordially," said Alice, trying to appear unconcerned, but oppressed by a vague dread of Cashel.

"That's the traditional manner," said Lord Worthington. "It is done that way to prevent one from holding the other; pulling him over, and hitting him with the disengaged hand before he could get loose."

"What abominable treachery!" exclaimed Lydia.

"It's never done, you know," said Lord Worthington, apologetically. "Only it might be."

Lydia turned away from him, and gave all her attention to the boxers. Of the two, Paradise shocked her least. He was evidently nervous and conscious of a screwed-up condition as to his courage; but his sly grin implied a wild sort of good-humor, and seemed to promise the spectators that he would show them some fun presently. Cashel watched his movements with a relentless vigilance and a sidelong glance in which, to Lydia's apprehension, there was something infernal.

Suddenly the eyes of Paradise lit up: he lowered his head, made a rush, balked himself purposely, and darted at Cashel. There was a sound like the pop of a champagne-cork, after which Cashel was seen undisturbed in the middle of the ring, and Paradise, flung against the ropes and trying to grin at his discomfiture, showed his white teeth through a mask of blood.

"Beautiful!" cried Skene with emotion. "Beautiful! There ain't but me and my boy in the world can give the upper cut like that! I wish I could see my old missis's face now! This is nuts to her."

"Let us go away," said Alice.

"That was a very different blow to any that the gentlemen gave," said Lydia, without heeding her, to Lord Worthington. "The man is bleeding horribly."

"It's only his nose," said Lord Worthington. "He's used to it."

Meanwhile Cashel had followed Paradise to the ropes.

"Now he has him," chuckled Skene. "My boy's got him agin the ropes; and he means to keep him there. Let him rush now, if he can. See what it is to have a good judgment."

Mellish shook his head again despondently. The remaining minutes of the round were unhappy ones for Paradise. He struck viciously at his opponent's ribs; but Cashel stepped back just out of his reach, and then returned with extraordinary swiftness and dealt him blows from which, with the ropes behind him, he had no room to retreat, and which he was too slow to stop or avoid. His attempts to reach his enemy's face were greatly to the disadvantage of his own; for Cashel's blows were never so tremendous as when he turned his head deftly out of harm's way, and met his advancing foe with a counter hit. He showed no chivalry and no mercy, and revelled in the hardness of his hitting; his gloves either resounding on Paradise's face or seeming to go almost through his body. There was little semblance to a contest: to Lydia there was nothing discernible but a cruel assault by an irresistible athlete on a helpless victim. The better sort among the spectators were disgusted by the sight; for, as Paradise bled profusely, and as his blood besmeared the gloves and the gloves besmeared the heads and bodies of both combatants, they were soon stained with it from their waists upward. The managers held a whispered consultation as to whether the sparring exhibition had not better be stopped; but they decided to let it proceed on seeing the African king, who had watched the whole entertainment up to the present without displaying the least interest, now raise his hands and clap them with delight.

"Billy don't look half pleased with hisself," observed Mellish, as the two boxers sat down. "He looks just like he did when he spiked Shepstone."

"What does spiking mean?" said Lydia.

"Treading on a man's foot with spiked boots," replied Lord Worthington. "Don't be alarmed; they have no spikes in their shoes to-day. It is not my fault that they do such things, Miss Carew. Really, you make me feel quite criminal when you look at me in that way."

Time was now called; and the pugilists, who had, by dint of sponging, been made somewhat cleaner, rose with mechanical promptitude at the sound. Cashel had hardly advanced two steps when, though his adversary seemed far out of his reach, he struck him on the forehead with such force as to stagger him, and then jumped back laughing. Paradise rushed forward; but Cashel eluded him, and fled round the ring, looking back derisively over his shoulder. Paradise now dropped all pretence of good-humor. With an expression of reckless ferocity, he dashed at Cashel; endured a startling blow without flinching, and engaged him at close quarters. For a moment the falling of their blows reminded Lydia of the rush of raindrops against a pane in a sudden gust of wind. The next moment Cashel was away; and Paradise, whose blood was again flowing, was trying to repeat his manœuvre, to be met this time by a blow that brought him upon one knee. He had scarcely risen when Cashel sprang at him; dealt him four blows with dazzling rapidity; drove him once more against the ropes; but this time, instead of keeping him there, ran away in the manner of a child at play. Paradise, with foam as well as blood at his lips, uttered a howl, and tore off his gloves. There was a shout of protest from the audience; and Cashel, warned by it, tried to get off his gloves in turn. But Paradise was upon him before he could accomplish this, and the two men laid hold of one another amid a great clamor, Lord Worthington and others rising and excitedly shouting, "Against the rules! No wrestling!" followed by a roar of indignation as Paradise was seen to seize Cashel's shoulder in his teeth as they struggled for the throw. Lydia, for the first time in her life, screamed. Then she saw Cashel, his face fully as fierce as Paradise's, get his arm about his neck; lift him as a coal-heaver lifts a sack, and fling him over his back, heels over head, to the ground, where he instantly dropped on him with his utmost weight and impetus. The two were at once separated by a crowd of managers, umpires, policemen, and others who had rushed towards the ring when Paradise had taken off his gloves. A distracting wrangle followed. Skene had climbed over the palisade, and was hurling oaths, threats, and epithets at Paradise, who, unable to stand without assistance, was trying to lift his leaden eyelids and realize what had happened to him. A dozen others were trying to bring him to his senses, remonstrating with him on his conduct, or trying to pacify Skene. Cashel, on the other side, raged at the managers, who were reminding him that the rules of glove-fighting did not allow wrestling and throwing.

"Rules be d——d," Lydia heard him shouting. "He bit me; and I'll throw him to—" Then everybody spoke at once; and she could only conjecture where he would throw him to. He seemed to have no self-control: Paradise, when he came to himself, behaved better. Lord Worthington descended into the ring and tried to calm the hubbub; but Cashel shook his hand fiercely from his arm; menaced a manager who attempted to call him sternly to order; frantically pounded his wounded shoulder with his clenched fist, and so outswore and outwrangled them all, that even Skene began to urge that there had been enough fuss made. Then Lord Worthington whispered a word more; and Cashel suddenly subsided, pale and ashamed, and sat down on a chair in his corner as if to hide himself. Five minutes afterwards, he stepped out from the crowd with Paradise, and shook hands with him amid much cheering. Cashel was the humbler of the two. He did not raise his eyes to the balcony once; and he seemed in a hurry to retire. But he was intercepted by an officer in uniform, accompanied by a black chief, who came to conduct him to the dais and present him to the African king; an honor which he was not permitted to decline.

The king informed him, through an interpreter, that he had been unspeakably gratified by what he had just witnessed; expressed great surprise that Cashel, notwithstanding his prowess, was neither in the army nor in Parliament; and finally offered to provide him with three handsome wives if he would come out to Africa in his suite. Cashel was much embarrassed; but he came off with credit, thanks to the interpreter, who was accustomed to invent appropriate speeches for the king on public occasions, and was kind enough to invent equally appropriate ones for Cashel on this.

Meanwhile, Lord Worthington had returned to his place. "It is all settled now," he said to Lydia. "Byron shut up when I told him his aristocratic friends were looking at him; and Paradise has been so bullied that he is crying in a corner down-stairs. He has apologized; but he still maintains that he can beat our mutual friend without the gloves; and his backers apparently think so too, for it is understood that they are to fight in the autumn for a thousand a side."

"To fight! Then he has no intention of giving up his profession?"

"No!" said Lord Worthington, astonished. "Why on earth should he give it up? Paradise's money is as good as in his pocket. You have seen what he can do."

"I have seen enough. Alice, I am ready to go as soon as you are."

Early in the following week Miss Carew returned to Wiltstoken. Miss Goff remained in London to finish the season in charge of a friendly lady who, having married off all her own daughters, was willing to set to work again to marry Alice sooner than remain idle.

CHAPTER XI

Alice was more at her ease during the remnant of the London season. Though she had been proud of her connection with Lydia, she had always felt eclipsed in her presence; and now that Lydia was gone, the pride remained and the sense of inferiority was forgotten. Her freedom emboldened and improved her. She even began to consider her own judgment a safer guide in the affairs of every day than the example of her patroness. Had she not been right in declaring Cashel Byron an ignorant and common man when Lydia, in spite of her warning, had actually invited him to visit them? And now all the newspapers were confirming the opinion she had been trying to impress on Lydia for months past. On the evening of the assault-at-arms, the newsmen had shouted through the streets, "Disgraceful scene between two pugilists at Islington in the presence of the African king." Next day the principal journals commented on the recent attempt to revive the brutal pastime of prize-fighting; accused the authorities of conniving at it, and called on them to put it down at once with a strong hand. "Unless," said a clerical organ, "this plague-spot be rooted out from our midst, it will no longer be possible for our missionaries to pretend that England is the fount of the Gospel of Peace." Alice collected these papers, and forwarded them to Wiltstoken.

On this subject one person at least shared her bias. Whenever she met Lucian Webber, they talked about Cashel, invariably coming to the conclusion that though the oddity of his behavior had gratified Lydia's unfortunate taste for eccentricity, she had never regarded him with serious interest, and would not now, under any circumstances, renew her intercourse with him. Lucian found little solace in these conversations, and generally suffered from a vague sense of meanness after them. Yet next time they met he would drift into discussing Cashel over again; and he always rewarded Alice for the admirable propriety of her views by dancing at least three times with her when dancing was the business of the evening. The dancing was still less congenial than the conversation. Lucian, who had at all times too much of the solemnity of manner for which Frenchmen reproach Englishmen, danced stiffly and unskilfully. Alice, whose muscular power and energy were superior to anything of the kind that Mr. Mellish could artificially produce, longed for swift motion and violent exercise, and, even with an expert partner, could hardly tame herself to the quietude of dancing as practised in London. When waltzing with Lucian she felt as though she were carrying a stick round the room in the awkward fashion in which Punch carries his baton. In spite of her impression that he was a man of unusually correct morals and great political importance, and greatly to be considered in private life because he was Miss Carew's cousin, it was hard to spend quarter-hours with him that some of the best dancers in London asked for.

She began to tire of the subject of Cashel and Lydia. She began to tire of Lucian's rigidity. She began to tire exceedingly of the vigilance she had to maintain constantly over her own manners and principles. Somehow, this vigilance defeated itself; for she one evening overheard a lady of rank speak of her as a stuck-up country girl. The remark gave her acute pain: for a week afterwards she did not utter a word or make a movement in society without first considering whether it could by any malicious observer be considered rustic or stuck-up. But the more she strove to attain perfect propriety of demeanor, the more odious did she seem to herself, and, she inferred, to others. She longed for Lydia's secret of always doing the right thing at the right moment, even when defying precedent. Sometimes she blamed the dulness of the people she met for her shortcomings. It was impossible not to be stiff with them. When she chatted with an entertaining man, who made her laugh and forget herself for a while, she was conscious afterwards of having been at her best with him. But she saw others who, in stupid society, were pleasantly at their ease. She began to fear at last that she was naturally disqualified by her comparatively humble birth from acquiring the well-bred air for which she envied those among whom she moved.

One day she conceived a doubt whether Lucian was so safe an authority and example in matters of personal deportment as she had hitherto unthinkingly believed. He could not dance; his conversation was priggish; it was impossible to feel at ease when speaking to him. Was it courageous to stand in awe of his opinion? Was it courageous to stand in awe of anybody? Alice closed her lips proudly and began to feel defiant. Then a reminiscence, which had never before failed to rouse indignation in her, made her laugh. She recalled the scandalous spectacle of Lucian's formal perpendicularity overbalanced and doubled up into Mrs. Hoskyn's gilded arm-chair in illustration of the prize-fighter's theory of effort defeating itself. After all, what was that caressing touch of Cashel's hand in comparison with the tremendous rataplan he had beaten on the ribs of Paradise? Could it be true that effort defeated itself—in personal behavior, for instance? A ray of the truth that underlay Cashel's grotesque experiment was flickering in her mind as she asked herself that question. She thought a good deal about it; and one afternoon, when she looked in at four at-homes in succession, she studied the behavior of the other guests from a new point of view, comparing the most mannered with the best mannered, and her recent self with both. The result half convinced her that she had been occupied during her first London season in displaying, at great pains, a very unripe self-consciousness—or, as she phrased it, in making an insufferable fool of herself.

Shortly afterwards, she met Lucian at a cinderella, or dancing-party concluding at midnight. He came at eleven, and, as usual, gravely asked whether he might have the pleasure of dancing with her. This form of address he never varied. To his surprise, she made some difficulty about granting the favor, and eventually offered him "the second extra." He bowed. Before he could resume a vertical position a young man came up, remarked that he thought this was his turn, and bore Alice away. Lucian smiled indulgently, thinking that though Alice's manners were wonderfully good, considering her antecedents, yet she occasionally betrayed a lower tone than that which he sought to exemplify in his own person.

"I wish you would learn to reverse," said Alice unexpectedly to him, when they had gone round the room twice to the strains of the second extra.

"I *do* reverse," he said, taken aback, and a little indignant.

"Everybody does—that way."

This silenced him for a moment. Then he said, slowly, "Perhaps I am rather out of practice. I am not sure that reversing is quite desirable. Many people consider it bad form."

When they stopped—Alice was always willing to rest during a waltz with Lucian—he asked her whether she had heard from Lydia.

"You always ask me that," she replied. "Lydia never writes except when she has something particular to say, and then only a few lines."

"Precisely. But she might have had something particular to say since we last met."

"She hasn't had," said Alice, provoked by an almost arch smile from him.

"She will be glad to hear that I have at last succeeded in recovering possession of the Warren Lodge from its undesirable tenants."

"I thought they went long ago," said Alice, indifferently.

"The men have not been there for a month or more. The difficulty was to get them to remove their property. However, we are rid of them now. The only relic of their occupation is a Bible with half the leaves torn out, and the rest scrawled with records of bets, recipes for sudorific and other medicines, and a mass of unintelligible memoranda. One inscription, in faded ink, runs, 'To Robert Mellish, from his affectionate mother, with her sincere hope that he may ever walk in the ways of this book.' I am afraid that hope was not fulfilled."

"How wicked of him to tear a Bible!" said Alice, seriously. Then she laughed, and added, "I know I shouldn't; but I can't help it."

"The incident strikes me rather as being pathetic," said Lucian, who liked to show that he was not deficient in sensibility. "One can picture the innocent faith of the poor woman in her boy's future, and so forth."

"Inscriptions in books are like inscriptions on tombstones," said Alice, disparagingly. "They don't mean much."

"I am glad that these men have no further excuse for going to Wiltstoken. It was certainly most unfortunate that Lydia should have made the acquaintance of one of them."

"So you have said at least fifty times," replied Alice, deliberately. "I believe you are jealous of that poor boxer."

Lucian became quite red. Alice trembled at her own audacity, but kept a bold front.

"Really—it's too absurd," he said, betraying his confusion by assuming a carelessness quite foreign to his normal manner. "In what way could I possibly be jealous, Miss Goff?"

"That is best known to yourself."

Lucian now saw plainly that there was a change in Alice, and that he had lost ground with her. The smarting of his wounded vanity suddenly obliterated his impression that she was, in the main, a well-conducted and meritorious young woman. But in its place came another impression that she was a spoiled beauty. And, as he was by no means fondest of the women whose behavior accorded best with his notions of propriety, he found, without at once acknowledging to himself, that the change was not in all respects a change for the worse. Nevertheless, he could not forgive her last remark, though he took care not to let her see how it stung him.

"I am afraid I should cut a poor figure in an encounter with my rival," he said, smiling.

"Call him out and shoot him," said Alice, vivaciously. "Very likely he does not know how to use a pistol."

He smiled again; but had Alice known how seriously he entertained her suggestion for some moments before dismissing it as impracticable, she would not have offered it. Putting a bullet into Cashel struck him rather as a luxury which he could not afford than as a crime. Meanwhile, Alice, being now quite satisfied that this Mr. Webber, on whom she had wasted so much undeserved awe, might be treated as inconsiderately as she used to treat her beaux at Wiltstoken, proceeded to amuse herself by torturing him a little.

"It is odd," she said, reflectively, "that a common man like that should be able to make himself so very attractive to Lydia. It was not because he was such a fine man; for she does not care in the least about that. I don't think she would give a second look at the handsomest man in London, she is so purely intellectual. And yet she used to delight in talking to him."

"Oh, that is a mistake. Lydia has a certain manner which leads people to believe that she is deeply interested in the person she happens to be speaking to; but it is only manner—it means nothing."

"I know that manner of hers perfectly well. But this was something quite different."

Lucian shook his head reproachfully. "I cannot jest on so serious a matter," he said, resolving to make an attempt to re-establish his dignity with Alice. "I think, Miss Goff, that you perhaps hardly know how absurd your supposition is. There are not many men of distinction in Europe with whom my cousin is not personally acquainted. A very young girl, who had seen little of the world, might possibly be deceived by the exterior of such a man as Byron. A woman accustomed to associate with writers, thinkers, artists, statesmen, and diplomatists could make no such mistake. No doubt the man's vulgarity and uncouth address amused her for a moment; but—"

"But why did she ask him to come to her Friday afternoons?"

"A mere civility which she extended to him because he assisted her in some difficulty she got into in the streets."

"She might as well have asked a policeman to come to see her. I don't believe that was it."

Lucian at that moment hated Alice. "I am sorry you think such a thing possible," he said. "Shall we resume our waltz?"

Alice was not yet able to bear an implication that she did not understand society sufficiently to appreciate the distance between Lydia and Cashel.

"Of course I know it is impossible," she said, in her old manner. "I did not mean it."

Lucian found some difficulty in gathering from this what she did mean; and they presently took refuge in waltzing. Subsequently, Alice, fearing that her new lights had led her too far, drew back a little; led the conversation to political matters, and expressed her amazement at the extent and variety of the work he performed in Downing Street. He accepted her compliments with perfect seriousness; and she felt satisfied that she had, on the whole, raised herself in his esteem by her proceedings during the evening. But she was mistaken. She knew nothing of politics or official work, and he knew the worthlessness of her pretended admiration of his share in them, although he felt that it was right that she should revere his powers from the depths of her ignorance. What stuck like a burr in his mind was that she thought him small enough to be jealous of the poor boxer, and found his dancing awkward.

After that dance Alice thought much about Lucian, and also about the way in which society regulated marriages. Before Miss Carew sent for her she had often sighed because all the nice men she knew of moved in circles into which an obscure governess had no chance of admission. She had received welcome attentions from them occasionally at subscription balls; but for sustained intimacy and proposals of marriage she had been dependent on the native youth of Wiltstoken, whom she looked upon as louts or prigs, and among whom Wallace Parker had shone pre-eminent as a university man, scholar, and gentleman. And now that she was a privileged beauty in society which would hardly tolerate Wallace Parker, she found that the nice men were younger sons, poor and extravagant, far superior to Lucian Webber as partners for a waltz, but not to be thought of as partners in domestic economy. Alice had experienced the troubles of poverty, and had never met with excellence in men except in poems, which she had long ago been taught to separate from the possibilities of actual life. She had, therefore, no conception of any degree of merit in a husband being sufficient to compensate for slender means of subsistence. She was not base-minded;

nothing could have induced her to marry a man, however rich, whom she thought wicked. She wanted money; but she wanted more than money; and here it was that she found supply failing to answer the demand. For not only were all the handsome, gallant, well-bred men getting deeply into debt by living beyond smaller incomes than that with which Wallace Parker had tempted her, but many of those who had inherited both riches and rank were as inferior to him, both in appearance and address, as they were in scholarship. No man, possessing both wealth and amiability, had yet shown the least disposition to fall in love with her.

One bright forenoon in July, Alice, attended by a groom, went to the park on horseback. The Row looked its best. The freshness of morning was upon horses and riders; there were not yet any jaded people lolling supine in carriages, nor discontented spectators sitting in chairs to envy them. Alice, who was a better horsewoman than might have been expected from the little practice she had had, appeared to advantage in the saddle. She had just indulged in a brisk canter from the Corner to the Serpentine, when she saw a large white horse approaching with Wallace Parker on its back.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, expertly wheeling his steed and taking off his hat at the same time with an intentional display of gallantry and horsemanship. "How are you, Alice?"

"Goodness!" cried Alice, forgetting her manners in her astonishment. "What brings you here; and where on earth did you get that horse?"

"I presume, Alice," said Parker, satisfied with the impression he had made, "that I am here for much the same reason as you are—to enjoy the morning in proper style. As for Rozinante, I borrowed him. Is that chestnut yours? Excuse the rudeness of the question."

"No," said Alice, coloring a little. "This seems such an unlikely place to meet you."

"Oh, no. I always take a turn in the season. But certainly it would have been a very unlikely place for us to meet a year ago."

So far, Alice felt, she was getting the worst of the conversation. She changed the subject. "Have you been to Wiltstoken since I last saw you?"

"Yes. I go there once every week at least."

"Every week! Janet never told me."

Parker implied by a cunning air that he thought he knew the reason of that; but he said nothing. Alice, piqued, would not condescend to make inquiries. So he said, presently,

"How is Miss Thingumbob?"

"I do not know any one of that name."

"You know very well whom I mean. Your aristocratic patron, Miss Carew."

Alice flushed. "You are very impertinent, Wallace," she said, grasping her riding-whip. "How dare you call Miss Carew my patron?"

Wallace suddenly became solemn. "I did not know that you objected to be reminded of all you owe her," he said. "Janet never speaks ungratefully of her, though she has done nothing for Janet."

"I have not spoken ungratefully," protested Alice, almost in tears. "I feel sure that you are never tired of speaking ill of me to them at home."

"That shows how little you understand my real character. I always make excuses for you."

"Excuses for what? What have I done? What do you mean?"

"Oh, I don't mean anything, if you don't. I thought from your beginning to defend yourself that you felt yourself to be in the wrong."

"I did not defend myself; and I won't have you say so, Wallace."

"Always your obedient, humble servant," he replied, with complacent irony.

She pretended not to hear him, and whipped up her horse to a smart trot. The white steed being no trotter, Parker followed at a lumbering canter. Alice, possessed by a shamefaced fear that he was making her ridiculous, soon checked her speed; and the white horse subsided to a walk, marking its paces by deliberate bobs of its unfashionably long mane and tail.

"I have something to tell you," said Parker at last.

Alice did not deign to reply.

"I think it better to let you know at once," he continued. "The fact is, I intend to marry Janet."

"Janet won't," said Alice, promptly, retorting first, and then reflecting on the intelligence, which surprised her more than it pleased her.

Parker smiled conceitedly, and said, "I don't think she will raise any difficulty if you give her to understand that it is all over between *us*."

"That what is all over?"

"Well, if you prefer it, that there never has been anything between us. Janet believes that we were engaged. So did a good many other people until you went into high life."

"I cannot help what people thought."

"And they all know that I, at least, was ready to perform my part of the engagement honorably."

"Wallace," she said, with a sudden change of tone; "I think we had better separate. It is not right for me to be riding about the park with you when I have nobody belonging to me here except a man-servant."

"Just as you please," he said, coolly, halting. "May I assure Janet that you wish her to marry me?"

"Most certainly not. I do not wish any one to marry you, much less my own sister. I am far inferior to Janet; and she deserves a much better husband than I do."

"I quite agree with you, though I don't quite see what that has to do with it. As far as I understand you, you will neither marry me yourself—mind, I am quite willing to fulfil my engagement still—nor let any one else have me. Is that so?"

"You may tell Janet," said Alice, vigorously, her face glowing, "that if we—you and I—were condemned to live forever on a desert isl— No; I will write to her. That will be the best way. Good-morning."

Parker, hitherto imperturbable, now showed signs of alarm. "I beg, Alice," he said, "that you will say nothing unfair to her of me. You cannot with truth say anything bad of me."

"Do you really care for Janet?" said Alice, wavering.

"Of course," he replied, indignantly. "Janet is a very superior girl."

"I have always said so," said Alice, rather angry because some one else had forestalled her with the meritorious admission. "I will tell her the simple truth—that there has never been anything between us except what is between all cousins; and that there never could have been anything more on my part. I must go now. I don't know what that man must think of me already."

"I should be sorry to lower you in his esteem," said Parker, maliciously. "Good-bye, Alice." Uttering the last words in a careless tone, he again pulled up the white horse's head, raised his hat, and sped away. It was not true that he was in the habit of riding in the park every season. He had learned from Janet that Alice was accustomed to ride there in the forenoon; and he had hired the white horse in order to meet her on equal terms, feeling that a gentleman on horseback in the road by the Serpentine could be at no social disadvantage with any lady, however exalted her associates.

As for Alice, she went home with his reminder that Miss Carew was her patron rankling in her. The necessity for securing an independent position seemed to press imminently upon her. And as the sole way of achieving this was by marriage, she felt for the time willing to marry any man, without regard to his person, age, or disposition, if only he could give her a place equal to that of Miss Carew in the world, of which she had lately acquired the manners and customs.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN the autumn set in, Alice was in Scotland learning to shoot; and Lydia was at Wiltstoken, preparing her father's letters and memoirs for publication. She did not write at the castle, all the rooms in which were either domed, vaulted, gilded, galleried, three-sided, six-sided, anything except four-sided, or in some way suggestive of the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," and out of keeping with the associations of her father's life. In her search for a congruous room to work in, the idea of causing a pavilion to be erected in the elm vista occurred to her. But she had no mind to be disturbed just then by the presence of a troop of stone-masons, slaters, and carpenters, nor any time to lose in waiting for the end of their operations. So she had the Warren Lodge cleansed and lime washed, and the kitchen transformed into a comfortable library, where, as she sat facing the door at her writing-table, in the centre of the room, she could see the elm vista through one window and through another a tract of wood and meadow land intersected by the high-road and by a canal, beyond which the prospect ended in a distant green slope used as a sheep run. The other apartments were used by a couple of maid-servants, who kept the place well swept and dusted, prepared Miss Carew's lunch, answered her bell, and went on her errands to the castle; and, failing any of these employments, sat outside in the sun, reading novels. When Lydia had worked in this retreat daily for two months her mind became so full of the old life with her father that the interruptions of the servants often recalled her to the present with a shock. On the twelfth of August she was bewildered for a moment when Phœbe, one of the maids, entered and said,

"If you please, miss, Bashville is wishful to know can he speak to you a moment?"

Permission being given, Bashville entered. Since his wrestle with Cashel he had never quite recovered his former imperturbability. His manner and speech were as smooth and respectful as before, but his countenance was no longer steadfast; he was on bad terms with the butler because he had been reproved by him for blushing. On this occasion he came to beg leave to absent himself during the afternoon. He seldom asked favors of this kind, and was of course never refused.

"The road is quite thronged to-day," she observed, as he thanked her. "Do you know why?"

"No, madam," said Bashville, and blushed.

"People begin to shoot on the twelfth," she said; "but I suppose it cannot have anything to do with that. Is there a race, or a fair, or any such thing in the neighborhood?"

"Not that I am aware of, madam."

Lydia dipped her pen in the ink and thought no more of the subject. Bashville returned to the castle, attired himself like a country gentleman of sporting tastes, and went out to enjoy his holiday.

The forenoon passed away peacefully. There was no sound in the Warren Lodge except the scratching of Lydia's pen, the ticking of her favorite skeleton clock, an occasional clatter of crockery from the kitchen, and the voices of the birds and maids without. The hour for lunch approached, and Lydia became a little restless. She interrupted her work to look at the clock, and brushed a speck of dust from its dial with the feather of her quill. Then she looked absently through the window along the elm vista, where she had once seen, as she had thought, a sylvan god. This time she saw a less romantic object—a policeman. She looked again, incredulously; there he was still, a black-bearded, helmeted man, making a dark blot in the green perspective, and surveying the landscape cautiously. Lydia rang the bell, and bade Phœbe ask the man what he wanted.

The girl soon returned out of breath, with the news that there were a dozen more constables hiding in the road, and that the one she had spoken to had given no account of himself, but had asked her how many gates there were to the park; whether they were always locked, and whether she had seen many people about. She felt sure that a murder had been committed somewhere. Lydia shrugged her shoulders, and ordered luncheon, during which Phœbe gazed eagerly through the window, and left her mistress to wait on herself.

"Phœbe," said Lydia, when the dishes were removed; "you may go to the gate lodge, and ask them there what the policemen want. But do not go any farther. Stay. Has Ellen gone to the castle with the things?"

Phœbe reluctantly admitted that Ellen had.

"Well, you need not wait for her to return; but come back as quickly as you can, in case I should want anybody."

"Directly, miss," said Phœbe, vanishing.

Lydia, left alone, resumed her work leisurely, occasionally pausing to gaze at the distant woodland, and note with transient curiosity a flock of sheep on the slope, or a flight of birds above the tree-tops. Something more startling occurred presently. A man, apparently half-naked, and carrying a black object under his arm, darted through a remote glade with the swiftness of a stag, and disappeared. Lydia concluded that he had been disturbed while bathing in the canal, and had taken flight with his wardrobe under his arm. She laughed at the idea, turned to her manuscript again, and wrote on. Suddenly there was a rustle and a swift footstep without. Then the latch was violently jerked up, and Cashel Byron rushed in as far as the threshold, where he stood, stupefied at the presence of Lydia, and the change in the appearance of the room.

He was himself remarkably changed. He was dressed in a pea-jacket, which evidently did not belong to him, for it hardly reached his middle, and the sleeves were so short that his forearms were half bare, showing that he wore nothing beneath this borrowed garment. Below it he had on white knee-breeches, with green stains of bruised grass on them. The breeches were made with a broad flap in front, under which, and passing round his waist, was a scarf of crimson silk. From his knees to his socks, the edges of which had fallen over his laced boots, his legs were visible, naked, and muscular. On his face was a mask of sweat, dust, and blood, partly rubbed away in places by a sponge, the borders of its passage marked by black streaks. Underneath his left eye was a mound of bluish flesh nearly as large as a walnut. The jaw below it, and the opposite cheek, were severely bruised, and his lip was cut through at one corner. He had no hat; his close-cropped hair was disordered, and his ears were as though they had been rubbed with coarse sand-paper.

Lydia looked at him for some seconds, and he at her, speechless. Then she tried to speak, failed, and sunk into her chair.

"I didn't know there was any one here," he said, in a hoarse, panting whisper. "The police are after me. I have fought for an hour, and run over a mile, and I'm dead beat—I can go no farther. Let me hide in the back room, and tell them you haven't seen any one, will you?"

"What have you done?" she said, conquering her weakness with an effort, and standing up.

"Nothing," he replied, groaning occasionally as he recovered breath. "Business, that's all."

"Why are the police pursuing you? Why are you in such a dreadful condition?"

Cashel seemed alarmed at this. There was a mirror in the lid of a paper-case on the table. He took it up and looked at himself anxiously, but was at once relieved by what he saw. "I'm all right," he said. "I'm not marked. That mouse"—he pointed gayly to the lump under his eye—"will run away to-morrow. I am pretty tidy, considering. But it's bellows to mend with me at present. Whoosh! My heart is as big as a bullock's after that run."

"You ask me to shelter you," said Lydia, sternly. "What have you done? Have you committed murder?"

"No!" exclaimed Cashel, trying to open his eyes widely in his astonishment, but only succeeding with one, as the other was gradually closing. "I tell you I have been fighting; and it's illegal. You don't want to see me in prison, do you? Confound him," he added, reverting to her question with sudden wrath; "a steam-hammer wouldn't kill him. You might as well hit a sack of nails. And all my money, my time, my training, and my day's trouble gone for nothing! It's enough to make a man cry."

"Go," said Lydia, with uncontrollable disgust. "And do not let me see which way you go. How dare you come to me?"

The sponge-marks on Cashel's face grew whiter, and he began to pant heavily again. "Very well," he said. "I'll go. There isn't a boy in your stables that would give me up like that."

As he spoke, he opened the door; but he involuntarily shut it again immediately. Lydia looked through the window, and saw a crowd of men, police and others, hurrying along the elm vista. Cashel cast a glance round, half piteous, half desperate, like a hunted animal. Lydia could not resist it. "Quick!" she cried, opening one of the inner doors. "Go in there, and keep quiet—if you can." And, as he sulkily hesitated a moment, she stamped vehemently. He slunk in submissively. She shut the door and resumed her place at the writing-table, her heart beating with a kind of excitement she had not felt since, in her early childhood, she had kept guilty secrets from her nurse.

There was a tramping without, and a sound of voices. Then two peremptory raps at the door.

"Come in," said Lydia, more composedly than she was aware of. The permission was not waited for. Before she ceased speaking a policeman opened the door and looked quickly round the room. He seemed rather taken aback by what he saw, and finally touched his helmet to signify respect for Lydia. He was about to speak, when Phœbe, flushed with running, pushed past him, put her hand on the door, and pertly asked what he wanted.

"Come away from the door, Phœbe," said Lydia. "Wait here with me until I give you leave to go," she added, as the girl moved towards the inner door. "Now," she said, turning courteously to the policeman, "what is the matter?"

"I ask your pardon, mum," said the constable, agreeably. "Did you happen to see any one pass hereabouts lately?"

"Do you mean a man only partly dressed, and carrying a black coat?" said Lydia.

"That's him, miss," said the policeman, greatly interested. "Which way did he go?"

"I will show you where I saw him," said Lydia, quietly rising and going with the man to the door, outside which she found a crowd of rustics, and five policemen, having in custody two men, one of whom was Mellish (without a coat), and the other a hook-nosed man, whose like Lydia had seen often on race-courses. She pointed out the glade across which she had seen Cashel run, and felt as if the guilt of the deception she was practising was wrenching some fibre in her heart from its natural order. But she spoke with apparent self-possession, and no shade of suspicion fell on the minds of the police.

Several peasants now came forward, each professing to know exactly whither Cashel had been making when he crossed the glade. While they were disputing, many persons resembling the hook-nosed captive in general appearance sneaked into the crowd and regarded the police with furtive hostility. Soon after, a second detachment of police came up, with another prisoner and another crowd, among whom was Bashville.

"Better go in, mum," said the policeman who had spoken to Lydia first. "We must keep together, being so few, and he ain't fit for you to look at."

But Lydia had looked already, and had guessed that the last prisoner was Paradise, although his countenance was damaged beyond recognition. His costume was like that of Cashel, except that he was girt with a blue handkerchief with white spots, and his shoulders were wrapped in a blanket, through one of the folds of which his naked ribs could be seen, tinged with every hue that a bad bruise can assume. A shocking spectacle appeared where his face had formerly been. A crease and a hole in the midst of a cluster of lumps of raw flesh indicated the presence of an eye and a mouth; the rest of his features were indiscernible. He could still see a little, for he moved his puffed and lacerated hand to arrange his blanket, and demanded hoarsely, and with greatly impeded articulation, whether the lady would stand a dram to a poor fighting man wot had done his best for his backers. On this some one produced a flask, and Mellish volunteered, provided he were released for a moment, to get the contents down Paradise's throat. As soon as the brandy had passed his swollen lips he made a few preliminary sounds, and then shouted,

"He sent for the coppers because he couldn't stand another round. I am ready to go on."

The policemen bade him hold his tongue, closed round him, and hid him from Lydia, who, without showing the mingled pity and loathing with which his condition inspired her, told them to bring him to the castle, and have him attended to there. She added that the whole party could obtain refreshment at the same time. The sergeant, who was very tired and thirsty, wavered in his resolution to continue the pursuit. Lydia, as usual, treated the matter as settled.

"Bashville," she said, "will you please show them the way, and see that they are satisfied."

"Some thief has stole my coat," said Mellish, sullenly, to Bashville. "If you'll lend me one, governor, and these blessed policemen will be so kind as not to tear it off my back, I'll send it down to you in a day or two. I'm a respectable man, and have been her ladyship's tenant here."

"Your pal wants it worse than you," said the sergeant. "If there was an old coachman's cape or anything to put over him, I would see it returned safe. I don't want to bring him round the country in a blanket, like a wild Injin."

"I have a cloak inside," said Bashville. "I'll get it for you." And before Lydia could devise a pretext for stopping him, he went out, and she heard him re-entering the lodge by the back door. It seemed to her that a silence fell on the crowd, as if her deceit were already discovered. Then Mellish, who had been waiting for an opportunity to protest against the last remark of the policeman, said, angrily,

"Who are you calling my pal? I hope I may be struck dead for a liar if ever I set my eyes on him in my life before."

Lydia looked at him as a martyr might look at a wretch to whom she was to be chained. He was doing as she had done—lying. Then Bashville, having passed through the other rooms, came into the library by the inner door, with an old livery cloak on his arm.

"Put that on him," he said, "and come along to the castle with me. You can see the roads for five miles round from the south tower, and recognize every man on them, through the big telescope. By your leave, madam, I think Phœbe had better come with us to help."

"Certainly," said Lydia, looking steadfastly at him.

"I'll get clothes at the castle for the man that wants them," he added, trying to return her gaze, but failing with a blush. "Now boys. Come along."

"I thank your ladyship," said the sergeant. "We have had a hard morning of it, and we can do no more at present than drink your health." He touched his helmet again, and Lydia bowed to him. "Keep close together, men," he shouted, as the crowd moved off with Bashville.

"Ah," sneered Mellish, "keep close together like the geese do. Things has come to a pretty pass when an Englishman is run in for stopping when he sees a crowd."

"All right," said the sergeant. "I have got that bundle of colored handkerchiefs you were selling; and I'll find the other man before you're a day older. It's a pity, seeing how you've behaved so well and haven't resisted us, that you won't drop a hint of where those ropes and stakes are hid. I might have a good word at the sessions for any one who would put me in the way of finding them."

"Ropes and stakes! Fiddlesticks and grandmothers! There weren't no ropes and stakes. It was only a turn-up—that is, if there was any fighting at all. *I* didn't see none; but I s'pose you did. But then you're clever, and I'm not."

By this time the last straggler of the party had disappeared from Lydia, who had watched their retreat from the door of the Warren Lodge. When she turned to go in she saw Cashel cautiously entering from the room in which he had lain concealed. His excitement had passed off; he looked cold and anxious, as if a reaction were setting in.

"Are they all gone?" he said. "That servant of yours is a good sort. He has promised to bring me some clothes. As for you, you're better than— What's the matter? Where are you going to?"

Lydia had put on her hat, and was swiftly wrapping herself in a shawl. Wreaths of rosy color were chasing each other through her cheeks; and her eyes and nostrils, usually so tranquil, were dilated.

"Won't you speak to me?" he said, irresolutely.

"Just this," she replied, with passion. "Let me never see you again. The very foundations of my life are loosened: I have told a lie. I have made my servant—an honorable man—an accomplice in a lie. We are worse than you; for even your wild-beast's handiwork is a less evil than the bringing of a falsehood into the world. This is what has come to me out of our acquaintance. I have given you a hiding-place. Keep it. I will never enter it again."

Cashel, appalled, shrank back with an expression such as a child wears when, in trying to steal sweetmeats from a high shelf, it pulls the whole cupboard down about its ears. He neither spoke nor stirred as she left the lodge.

Finding herself presently at the castle, she went to her boudoir, where she found her maid, the French lady, from whose indignant description of the proceedings below she gathered that the policemen were being regaled with bread and cheese, and beer; and that the attendance of a surgeon had been dispensed with, Paradise's wounds having been dressed skilfully by Mellish. Lydia bade her send Bashville to the Warren Lodge to see that there were no strangers loitering about it, and ordered that none of the female servants should return there until he came back. Then she sat down and tried not to think. But she could not help thinking; so she submitted and tried to think the late catastrophe out. An idea that she had disjointed the whole framework of things by creating a false belief filled her imagination. The one conviction that she had brought out of her reading, observing, reflecting, and living was that the concealment of a truth, with its resultant false beliefs, must produce mischief, even though the beginning of that mischief might be as inconceivable as the end. She made no distinction between the subtlest philosophical misconception and the vulgarest lie. The evil of Cashel's capture was measurable, the evil of a lie beyond all measure. She felt none the less assured of that evil because she could not foresee one bad consequence likely to ensue from what she had done. Her misgivings pressed heavily upon her; for her father, a determined sceptic, had taught her his own views, and she was, therefore, destitute of the consolations which religion has for the wrongdoer. It was plainly her duty to send for the policeman and clear up the deception she had practised on him. But this she could not do. Her will, in spite of her reason, acted in the opposite direction. And in this paralysis of her moral power she saw the evil of the lie beginning. She had given it birth, and nature would not permit her to strangle the monster.

At last her maid returned and informed her that the *canaille* had gone away. When she was again alone, she rose and walked slowly to and fro through the room, forgetting the lapse of time in the restless activity of her mind, until she was again interrupted, this time by Bashville.

"Well?"

He was daunted by her tone; for he had never before heard her speak haughtily to a servant. He did not understand that he had changed subjectively, and was now her accomplice.

"He's given himself up."

"What do you mean?" she said, with sudden dismay.

"Byron, madam. I brought some clothes to the lodge for him, but when I got there he was gone. I went round to the gates in search of him, and found him in the hands of the police. They told me he'd just given himself up. He wouldn't give any account of himself; and he looked—well, sullen and beaten down like."

"What will they do with him?" she asked, turning quite pale.

"A man got six weeks' hard labor, last month, for the same offence. Most probably that's what he'll get. And very little for what's he's done, as you'd say if you saw him doing it, madam."

"Then," said Lydia, sternly, "it was to see this" —she shrank from naming it—"this fight, that you asked my permission to go out!"

"Yes, madam, it was," said Bashville, with some bitterness. "I recognized Lord Worthington and plenty more noblemen and gentlemen there."

Lydia was about to reply sharply; but she checked herself; and her usual tranquil manner came back as she said, "That is no reason why you should have been there."

Bashville's color began to waver, and his voice to need increased control. "It's in human nature to go to such a thing once," he said; "but once is enough, at least for me. You'll excuse my mentioning it, madam; but what with Lord Worthington and the rest of Byron's backers screaming oaths and abuse at the other man, and the opposite party doing the same to Byron—well, I may not be a gentleman; but I hope I can conduct myself like a man, even when I'm losing money."

"Then do not go to such an exhibition again, Bashville. I must not dictate to you what your amusements shall be; but I do not think you are likely to benefit yourself by copying Lord Worthington's tastes."

"I copy no lord's tastes," said Bashville, reddening. "You hid the man that was fighting, Miss Carew. Why do you look down on the man that was only a bystander?"

Lydia's color rose, too. Her first impulse was to treat this outburst as rebellion against her authority, and crush it. But her sense of justice withheld her.

"Would you have had me betray a fugitive who took refuge in my house, Bashville? *You* did not betray him."

"No," said Bashville, his expression subdued to one of rueful pride. "When I am beaten by a better man, I have courage enough to get out of his way and take no mean advantage of him."

Lydia, not understanding, looked inquiringly at him. He made a gesture as if throwing something from him, and continued recklessly,

"But one way I'm as good as he, and better. A footman is held more respectable than a prize-fighter. He's told you that he's in love with you; and if it is to be my last word, I'll tell you that the ribbon round your neck is more to me than your whole body and soul is to him or his like. When he took an unfair advantage of me, and pretended to be a gentleman, I told Mr. Lucian of him, and showed him up for what he was. But when I found him to-day hiding in the pantry at the Lodge, I took no advantage of him, though I knew well that if he'd been no more to you than any other man of his sort, you'd never have hid him. You know best why he gave himself up to the police after your seeing his day's work. But I will leave him to his luck. He is the best man: let the best man win. I am sorry," added Bashville, recovering his ordinary suave manner with an effort, "to inconvenience you by a short notice, but I should take it as a particular favor if I might go this evening."

"You had better," said Lydia, rising quite calmly, and keeping resolutely away from her the strange emotional result of being astonished, outraged, and loved at one unlooked-for stroke. "It is not advisable that you should stay after what you have just—"

"I knew that when I said it," interposed Bashville hastily and doggedly.

"In going away you will be taking precisely the course that would be adopted by any gentleman who had spoken to the same effect. I am not offended by your declaration: I recognize your right to make it. If you need my testimony to further your future arrangements, I shall be happy to say that I believe you to be a man of honor."

Bashville bowed, and said in a low voice, very nervously, that he had no intention of going into service again, but that he should always be proud of her good opinion.

"You are fitted for better things," she said. "If you embark in any enterprise requiring larger means than you possess, I will be your security. I thank you for your invariable courtesy to me in the discharge of your duties. Good-bye."

She bowed to him and left the room. Bashville, awestruck, returned her salutation as best he could, and stood motionless after she disappeared; his mind advancing on tiptoe to grasp what had just passed. His chief sensation was one of relief. He no longer dared to fancy himself in love with such a woman. Her sudden consideration for him as a suitor overwhelmed him with a sense of his unfitness for such a part. He saw himself as a very young, very humble, and very ignorant man, whose head had been turned by a pleasant place and a kind mistress. Wakened from his dream, he stole away to pack his trunk, and to consider how best to account to his fellow-servants for his departure.

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CHAPTER XIII

Lydia resumed her work next day with shaken nerves and a longing for society. Many enthusiastic young ladies of her acquaintance would have brought her kisses and devotion by the next mail in response to a telegram; and many more practical people would have taken considerable pains to make themselves agreeable to her for the sake of spending the autumn at Wiltstoken Castle. But she knew that they would only cause her to regret her former solitude. She shrank from the people who attached themselves to her strength and riches even when they had not calculated her gain, and were conscious only of admiration and gratitude. Alice, as a companion, had proved a failure. She was too young, and too much occupied with the propriety of her own behavior, to be anything more to Lydia than an occasional tax upon her patience. Lydia, to her own surprise, thought several times of Miss Gisborne, and felt tempted to invite her, but was restrained by mistrust of the impulse to communicate with Cashel's mother, and reluctance to trace it to its source. Eventually she resolved to conquer her loneliness, and apply herself with increased diligence to the memoir of her father. To restore her nerves, she walked for an hour every day in the neighborhood, and drove out in a pony carriage, in the evening. Bashville's duties were now fulfilled by the butler and Phœbe, Lydia being determined to admit no more young footmen to her service.

One afternoon, returning from one of her daily walks, she found a stranger on the castle terrace, in conversation with the butler. As it was warm autumn weather, Lydia was surprised to see a woman wearing a black silk mantle trimmed with fur, and heavily decorated with spurious jet beads. However, as the female inhabitants of Wiltstoken always approached Miss Carew in their best raiment, without regard to hours or seasons, she concluded that she was about to be asked for a subscription to a school treat, a temperance festival, or perhaps a testimonial to one of the Wiltstoken curates.

When she came nearer she saw that the stranger was an elderly lady—or possibly not a lady—with crimped hair, and ringlets hanging at each ear in a fashion then long obsolete.

"Here is Miss Carew," said the butler, shortly, as if the old lady had tried his temper. "You had better talk to her yourself."

At this she seemed fluttered, and made a solemn courtesy. Lydia, noticing the courtesy and the curls, guessed that her visitor kept a dancing academy. Yet a certain contradictory hardihood in her frame and bearing suggested that perhaps she kept a tavern. However, as her face was, on the whole, an anxious and a good face, and as her attitude towards the lady of the castle was one of embarrassed humility, Lydia acknowledged her salutation kindly, and waited for her to speak.

"I hope you won't consider it a liberty," said the stranger, tremulously. "I'm Mrs. Skene."

Lydia became ominously grave; and Mrs. Skene reddened a little. Then she continued, as if repeating a carefully prepared and rehearsed speech, "It would be esteemed a favor if I might have the honor of a few words in private with your ladyship."

Lydia looked and felt somewhat stern; but it was not in her nature to rebuff any one without strong provocation. She invited her visitor to enter, and led the way to the circular drawing-room, the strange decorations of which exactly accorded with Mrs. Skene's ideas of aristocratic splendor. As a professor of deportment and etiquette, the ex-champion's wife was nervous under the observation of such an expert as Lydia; but she got safely seated without having made a mistake to reproach herself with. For, although entering a room seems a simple matter to many persons, it was to Mrs. Skene an operation governed by the strict laws of the art she professed, and one so elaborate that few of her pupils mastered it satisfactorily with less than a month's practice. Mrs. Skene soon dismissed it from her mind. She was too old to dwell upon such vanities when real anxieties were pressing upon her.

"Oh, miss," she began, appealingly, "the boy!"

Lydia knew at once who was meant. But she repeated, as if at a loss, "The boy?" And immediately accused herself of insincerity.

"Our boy, ma'am. Cashel."

"Mrs. Skene!" said Lydia, reproachfully.

Mrs. Skene understood all that Lydia's tone implied. "I know, ma'am," she pleaded. "I know well. But what could I do but come to you? Whatever you said to him, it has gone to his heart; and he's dying."

"Pardon me," said Lydia, promptly; "men do not die of such things; and Mr. Cashel Byron is not so deficient either in robustness of body or hardness of heart as to be an exception to *that* rule."

"Yes, miss," said Mrs. Skene, sadly. "You are thinking of the profession. You can't believe he has any feelings because he fights. Ah, miss, if you only knew them as I do! More tender-hearted men don't breathe. Cashel is like a young child, his feelings are that easily touched; and I have known stronger than he to die of broken hearts only because they were unlucky in their calling. Just think what a high-spirited young man must feel when a lady calls him a wild beast. That was a cruel word, miss; it was, indeed."

Lydia was so disconcerted by this attack that she had to pause awhile before replying. Then she said, "Are you aware, Mrs. Skene, that my knowledge of Mr. Byron is very slight—that I have not seen him ten times in my life? Perhaps you do not know the circumstances in which I last saw him. I was greatly shocked by the injuries he had inflicted on another man; and I believe I spoke of them as the work of a wild beast. For your sake, I am sorry I said so; for he has told me that he regards you as his mother; and—"

"Oh, no! Far from it, miss. I ask your pardon a thousand times for taking the word out of your mouth; but me and Ned is no more to him than your housekeeper or governess might be to you. That's what I'm afraid you don't understand, miss. He's no relation of ours. I do assure you that he's a gentleman born and bred; and when we go back to Melbourne next Christmas, it will be just the same as if he had never known us."

"I hope he will not be so ungrateful as to forget you. He has told me his history."

"That's more than he ever told me, miss; so you may judge how much he thinks of you."

A pause followed this. Mrs. Skene felt that the first exchange was over, and that she had got the better in it.

"Mrs. Skene," said Lydia then, penetratingly; "when you came to pay me this visit, what object did you propose to yourself? What do you expect me to do?"

"Well, ma'am," said Mrs. Skene, troubled, "the poor lad has had crosses lately. There was the disappointment about you—the first one, I mean—that had been preying on his mind for a long time. Then there was that exhibition spar at the Agricultural Hall, when Paradise acted so dishonorable. Cashel heard that you were looking on; and then he read the shameful way the newspapers wrote of him; and he thought you'd believe it all. I couldn't get that thought out of his head. I said to him, over and over again—"

"Excuse me," said Lydia, interrupting. "We had better be frank with one another. It is useless to assume that he mistook my feeling on that subject. I *was* shocked by the severity with which he treated his opponent."

"But bless you, that's his business," said Mrs. Skene, opening her eyes widely. "I put it to you, miss," she continued, as if mildly reprobating some want of principle on Lydia's part, "whether an honest man shouldn't fulfil his engagements. I assure you that the pay a respectable professional usually gets for a spar like that is half a guinea; and that was all Paradise got. But Cashel stood on his reputation, and wouldn't take less than ten guineas; and he got it, too. Now many another in his position would have gone into the ring and fooled away the time pretending to box, and just swindling those that paid him. But Cashel is as honest and high-minded as a king. You saw for yourself the trouble he took. He couldn't have spared himself less if he had been fighting for a thousand a side and the belt, instead of for a paltry ten guineas. Surely you don't think the worse of him for his honesty, miss?"

"I confess," said Lydia, laughing in spite of herself, "that your view of the transaction did not occur to me."

"Of course not, ma'am; no more it wouldn't to any one, without they were accustomed to know the right and wrong of the profession. Well, as I was saying, miss, that was a fresh disappointment to him. It worrited him more than you can imagine. Then came a deal of bother about the match with Paradise. First Paradise could only get five hundred pounds; and the boy wouldn't agree for less than a thousand. I think it's on your account that he's been so particular about the money of late; for he was never covetous before. Then Mellish was bent on its coming off down hereabouts; and the poor lad was so mortal afraid of its getting to your ears, that he wouldn't consent until they persuaded him you would be in foreign parts in August. Glad I was when the articles were signed at last, before he was worrited into his grave. All the time he was training he was longing for a sight of you; but he went through with it as steady and faithful as a man could. And he trained beautiful. I saw him on the morning of the fight; and he was like a shining angel; it would have done a lady's heart good to look at him. Ned went about like a madman offering twenty to one on him: if he had lost, we should have been ruined at this moment. And then to think of the police coming just as he was finishing Paradise. I cried like a child when I heard of it: I don't think there was ever anything so cruel. And he could have finished him quarter of an hour sooner, only he held back to make the market for Ned." Here Mrs. Skene, overcome, blew her nose before proceeding. "Then, on the top of that, came what passed betwixt you and him, and made him give himself up to the police. Lord Worthington bailed him out; but what with the disgrace and the disappointment, and his time and money thrown away, and the sting of your words, all coming together, he was quite broken-hearted. And now he mopes and frets; and neither me nor Ned nor Fan can get any good of him. They tell me that he won't be sent to prison; but if he is"—here Mrs. Skene broke down and began to cry—"it will be the death of him, and God forgive those that have brought it about."

Sorrow always softened Lydia; but tears hardened her again; she had no patience with them.

"And the other man?" she said. "Have you heard anything of him? I suppose he is in some hospital."

"In hospital!" repeated Mrs. Skene, checking her tears in alarm. "Who?"

"Paradise," replied Lydia, pronouncing the name reluctantly.

"He in hospital! Why, bless your innocence, miss, I saw him yesterday, looking as well as such an ugly brute could look—not a mark on him, and he bragging what he would have done to Cashel if the police hadn't come up. He's a nasty, low fighting man, so he is; and I'm only sorry that our boy demeaned himself to strip with the like of him. I hear that Cashel made a perfect picture of him, and that you saw him. I suppose you were frightened, ma'am, and very naturally, too, not being used to such sights. I have had my Ned brought home to me in that state that I have poured brandy into his eye, thinking it was his mouth; and even Cashel, careful as he is, has been nearly blind for three days. It is not to be expected that they could have all the money for nothing. Don't let it prey on your mind, miss. If you married—I am only supposing it," said Mrs. Skene in soothing parenthesis as she saw Lydia shrink from the word—"if you were married to a great surgeon, as you might be without derogation to your high rank, you'd be ready to faint if you saw him cut off a leg or an arm, as he would have to do every day for his livelihood; but you'd be proud of his cleverness in being able to do it. That's how I feel with regard to Ned. I tell you the truth, ma'am, I shouldn't like to see him in the ring no more than the lady of an officer in the Guards would like to see her husband in the field of battle running his sword into the poor blacks or into the French; but as it's his profession, and people think so highly of him for it, I make up my mind to it; and now I take quite an interest in it, particularly as it does nobody any harm. Not that I would have you think that Ned ever took the arm or leg off a man: Lord forbid—or Cashel either. Oh, ma'am, I thank you kindly, and I'm sorry you should have given yourself the trouble." This referred to the entry of a servant with tea.

"Still," said Lydia, when they were at leisure to resume the conversation, "I do not quite understand why you have come to me. Personally you are quite welcome; but in what way did you expect to relieve Mr. Byron's mind by visiting me? Did he ask you to come?"

"He'd have died first. I came down of my own accord, knowing what was the matter with him."

"And what then?"

Mrs. Skene looked around to satisfy herself that they were alone. Then she leaned towards Lydia, and said in an emphatic whisper,

"Why won't you marry him, miss?"

"Because I don't choose, Mrs. Skene," said Lydia, with perfect good-humor.

"But consider a little, miss. Where will you ever get such another chance? Only think what a man he is! champion of the world and a gentleman as well. The two things have never happened before, and never will again. I have known lots of champions, but they were not fit company for the like of you. Ned was champion when I married him; and my family thought that I lowered myself in doing it, although I was only a professional dancer on the stage. The men in the ring are common men mostly; and so, though they are the best men in the kingdom, ladies are cut off from their society. But it has been your good luck to take the fancy of one that's a gentleman. What more could a lady desire? Where will you find his equal in health, strength, good looks, or good manners? As to his character, I can tell you about that. In Melbourne, as you may suppose, all the girls and women were breaking their hearts for his sake. I declare to you that I used to have two or three of them in every evening merely to look at him, and he, poor innocent lad, taking no more notice of them than if they were cabbages. He used to be glad to get away from them by going into the saloon and boxing with the gentlemen; and then they used to peep at him through the door. They never got a wink from him. You were the first, Miss Carew; and, believe me, you will be the last. If there had ever been another he couldn't have kept it from me; because his disposition is as open as a child's. And his honesty is beyond everything you can imagine. I have known him to be offered eight hundred pounds to lose a fight that he could only get two hundred by winning, not to mention his chance of getting nothing at all if he lost honestly. You know—for I see you know the world, ma'am—how few men would be proof against such a temptation. There are men high up in their profession—so high that you'd as soon suspect the queen on her throne of selling her country's battles as them—that fight cross on the sly when it's made worth their while. My Ned is no low prize-fighter, as is well known; but when he let himself be beat by that little Killarney Primrose, and went out and bought a horse and trap next day, what could I think? There, ma'am, I tell you that of my own husband; and I tell you that Cashel never was beaten, although times out of mind it would have paid him better to lose than to win, along of those wicked betting men. Not an angry word have I ever had from him, nor the sign of liquor have I ever seen on him, except once on Ned's birthday; and then nothing but fun came out of him in his cups, when the truth comes out of all men. Oh, do just think how happy you ought to be, miss, if you would only bring yourself to look at it in the proper light. A gentleman born and bred, champion of the world, sober, honest, spotless as the unborn babe, able to take his own part and yours in any society, and mad in love with you ! He thinks you an angel from heaven —and so I am sure you are, miss, in your heart. I do assure you that my Fan gets quite put out because she thinks he draws comparisons to her disadvantage. I don't think you can be so hard to please as to refuse him, miss."

Lydia leaned back in her chair and looked at Mrs. Skene with a curious expression which soon brightened into an irrepressible smile. Mrs. Skene smiled very slightly in complaisance, but conveyed by her serious brow that what she had said was no laughing matter.

"I must take some time to consider all that you have so eloquently urged," said Lydia. "I am in earnest, Mrs. Skene; you have produced a great effect upon me. Now let us talk of something else for the present. Your daughter is quite well, I hope."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am, she enjoys her health."

"And you also ?"

"I am as well as can be expected," said Mrs. Skene, too fond of commiseration to admit that she was perfectly well.

"You must have a rare sense of security," said Lydia, watching her, "being happily married to so celebrated a—a professor of boxing as Mr. Skene. Is it not pleasant to have a powerful protector ?"

"Ah, miss, you little know," exclaimed Mrs. Skene, falling into the trap baited by her own grievances, and losing sight of Cashel's interests. "The fear of his getting into trouble is never off my mind. Ned is quietness itself until he has a drop of drink in him; and then he is like the rest—ready to fight the first that provokes him. And if the police get hold of him he has no chance. There's no justice for a fighting man. Just let it be said that he's a professional, and that's enough for the magistrate; away with him to prison, and good-by to his pupils and his respectability at once. That's what I live in terror of. And as to being protected, I'd let myself be robbed fifty times over sooner than say a word to him that might bring on a quarrel. Many a time when we were driving home of a night have I overpaid the cabman on the sly, afraid he would grumble and provoke Ned. It's the drink that does it all. Gentlemen are proud to be seen speaking with him in public; and they come up one after another asking what he'll have, until the next thing he knows is that he's in bed with his boots on, his wrist sprained, and maybe his eye black, trying to remember what he was doing the night before. What I suffered the first three years of our marriage none can tell. Then he took the pledge, and ever since that he's been very good—I haven't seen him what you could fairly call drunk, not more than three times a year. It was the blessing of God, and a beating he got from a milkman in Westminster, that made him ashamed of himself. I kept him to it and made him emigrate out of the way of his old friends. Since that, there has been a blessing on him; and we've prospered."

"Is Cashel quarrelsome?"

At the tone of this question Mrs. Skene suddenly realized the untimeliness of her complaints. "No, no," she protested. "He never drinks; and as to fighting, if you can believe such a thing, miss, I don't think he has had a casual turnup three times in his life—not oftener, at any rate. All he wants is to be married; and then he'll be steady to his grave. But if he's left adrift now, Lord knows what will become of him. He'll mope first—he's moping at present—then he'll drink; then he'll lose his pupils, get out of condition, be beaten, and— One word from you, miss, would save him. If I might just tell him—"

"Nothing," said Lydia. "Absolutely nothing. The only assurance I can give you is that you have softened the hard opinion that I had formed of some of his actions. But that I should marry Mr. Cashel Byron is simply the most improbable thing in the world. All questions of personal inclination apart, the mere improbability is enough in itself to appal an ordinary woman."

Mrs. Skene did not quite understand this; but she understood sufficiently for her purpose. She rose to go, shaking her head despondently, and saying, "I see how it is, ma'am. You think him beneath you. Your relations wouldn't like it."

"There is no doubt that my relatives would be greatly shocked; and I am bound to take that into account for—what it is worth."

"We should never trouble you," said Mrs. Skene, lingering. "England will see the last of us in a month or two."

"That will make no difference to me, except that I shall regret not being able to have a pleasant chat with you occasionally." This was not true; but Lydia fancied she was beginning to take a hardened delight in lying.

Mrs. Skene was not to be consoled by compliments. She again shook her head. "It is very kind of you to give me good words, miss," she said; "but if I might have one for the boy you could say what you liked to me."

Lydia considered far before she replied. At last she said, "I am sorry I spoke harshly to him, since, driven as he was by circumstances, I cannot see how he could have acted otherwise than he did. And I overlooked the economic conditions of his profession. In short, I am not used to fisticuffs; and what I saw shocked me so much that I was unreasonable. But," continued Lydia, checking Mrs. Skene's rising hope with a warning finger, "how, if you tell him this, will you make him understand that I say so as an act of justice, and not in the least as a proffer of affection?"

"A crumb of comfort will satisfy him, miss. I'll just tell him that I've seen you, and that you meant nothing by what you said the other day; and—"

"Mrs. Skene," said Lydia, interrupting her softly; "tell him nothing at all as yet. I have made up my mind at last. If he does not hear from me within a fortnight you may tell him what you please. Can you wait so long?"

"Of course. Whatever you wish, ma'am. But Mellish's benefit is to be to-morrow night; and—"

"What have I to do with Mellish or his benefit?"

Mrs. Skene, abashed, murmured apologetically that she was only wishful that the boy should do himself credit.

"If he is to benefit Mellish by beating somebody, he will not be behindhand. Remember you are not to mention me for a fortnight. Is that a bargain?"

"Whatever you wish, ma'am," repeated Mrs. Skene, hardly satisfied. But Lydia gave her no further comfort; so she begged to take her leave, expressing a hope that things would turn out to the advantage of all parties. Then Lydia insisted on her partaking of some solid refreshment, and afterwards drove her to the railway station in the pony-carriage. Just before they parted Lydia, suddenly recurring to their former subject, said,

"Does Mr. Byron ever *think?*"

"Think!" said Mrs. Skene emphatically. "Never. There isn't a more cheerful lad in existence, miss."

Then Mrs. Skene was carried away to London, wondering whether it could be quite right for a young lady to live in a gorgeous castle without any elder of her own sex, and to speak freely and civilly to her inferiors. When she got home she said nothing of her excursion to Mr. Skene, in whose disposition valor so entirely took the place of discretion that he had never been known to keep a secret except as to the whereabouts of a projected fight. But she sat up late with her daughter Fanny, tantalizing her by accounts of the splendor of the castle, and consoling her by describing Miss Carew as a slight creature with red hair and no figure (Fanny having jet black hair, fine arms, and being one of Cashel's most proficient pupils).

"All the same, Fan," added Mrs. Skene, as she took her candlestick at two in the morning, "if it comes off, Cashel will never be master in his own house."

"I can see that very plain," said Fanny; "but if respectable professional people are not good enough for him, he will have only himself to thank if he gets himself looked down upon by empty-headed swells."

Meanwhile, Lydia, on her return to the castle after a long drive round the country, had attempted to overcome an attack of restlessness by setting to work on the biography of her father. With a view to preparing a chapter on his taste in literature she had lately been examining his favorite books for marked passages. She now resumed this search, not setting methodically to work, but standing perched on the library ladder, taking down volume after volume, and occasionally dipping into the contents for a few pages or so. At this desultory work the time passed as imperceptibly as the shadows lengthened. The last book she examined was a volume of poems. There were no marks in it; but it opened at a page which had evidently lain open often before. The first words Lydia saw were these:

"What would I give for a heart of flesh to warm me through
Instead of this heart of stone ice-cold whatever I do;
Hard and cold and small, of all hearts the worst of all."

Lydia hastily stepped down from the ladder, and recoiled until she reached a chair, where she sat and read and reread these lines. The failing light roused her to action. She replaced the book on the shelf, and said, as she went to the writing-table, "If such a doubt as that haunted my father it will haunt me, unless I settle what is to be my heart's business now and forever. If it be possible for a child of mine to escape this curse of autovivisection, it must inherit its immunity from its father, and not from me—from the man of emotion who never thinks, and not from the woman of introspection, who cannot help thinking. Be it so."

CHAPTER XIV

Before many days had elapsed a letter came for Cashel as he sat taking tea with the Skene family. When he saw the handwriting, a deep red color mounted to his temples.

"Oh, Lor'!" said Miss Skene, who sat next him. "Let's read it."

"Go to the dickens," cried Cashel, hastily baffling her as she snatched at it.

"Don't worrit him, Fan," said Mrs. Skene, tenderly.

"Not for the world, poor dear," said Miss Skene, putting her hand affectionately on his shoulder. "Let me just peep at the name—to see who it's from. Do, Cashel, *dear*."

"It's from nobody," said Cashel. "Here, get out. If you don't let me alone I'll make it warm for you the next time you come to me for a lesson."

"Very likely," said Fanny, contemptuously. "Who had the best of it to-day, I should like to know?"

"Gev' him a hot un on the chin with her right as ever I see," observed Skene, with hoarse mirth.

Cashel went away from the table, out of Fanny's reach; and read the letter, which ran thus:

"Regent's Park.

"Dear Mr. Cashel Byron,—I am desirous that you should meet a lady friend of mine. She will be here at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon. You would oblige me greatly by calling on me at that hour.

"Yours faithfully,

"Lydia Carew."

There was a long pause, during which there was no sound in the room except the ticking of the clock and the munching of shrimps by the ex-champion.

"Good news, I hope, Cashel," said Mrs. Skene, at last, tremulously.

"Blow me if I understand it," said Cashel. "Can you make it out?" And he handed the letter to his adopted mother. Skene ceased eating to see his wife read, a feat which was to him one of the wonders of science.

"I think the lady she mentions must be herself," said Mrs. Skene, after some consideration.

"No," said Cashel, shaking his head. "She always says what she means."

"Ah," said Skene, cunningly; "but she can't write it though. That's the worst of writing; no one can't never tell exactly what it means. I never signed articles yet that there weren't some misunderstanding about; and articles is the best writing that can be had anywhere."

"You'd better go and see what it means," said Mrs. Skene.

"Right," said Skene. "Go and have it out with her, my boy."

"It is short, and not particularly sweet," said Fanny. "She might have had the civility to put her crest at the top."

"What would you give to be her?" said Cashel, derisively, catching the letter as she tossed it disdainfully to him.

"If I was I'd respect myself more than to throw myself at *your* head."

"Hush, Fanny," said Mrs. Skene; "you're too sharp. Ned, you oughtn't to encourage her by laughing."

Next day Cashel rose early, went for a walk, paid extra attention to his diet, took some exercise with the gloves, had a bath and a rub down, and presented himself at Regent's Park at three o'clock in excellent condition. Expecting to see Bashville, he was surprised when the door was opened by a female servant.

"Miss Carew at home?"

"Yes, sir," said the girl, falling in love with him at first sight. "Mr. Byron, sir?"

"That's me," said Cashel. "I say, is there any one with her?"

"Only a lady, sir."

"Oh, d——n! Well, it can't be helped. Never say die."

The girl led him then to a door, opened it, and when he entered shut it softly without announcing him. The room in which he found himself was a long one, lighted from the roof. The walls were hung with pictures. At the far end, with their backs towards him, were two ladies: Lydia, and a woman whose noble carriage and elegant form would have raised hopes of beauty in a man less preoccupied than Cashel. But he, after advancing some distance with his eyes on Lydia, suddenly changed countenance, stopped, and was actually turning to fly, when the ladies, hearing his light step, faced about and rooted him to the spot. As Lydia offered him her hand, her companion, who had surveyed the visitor first with indifference, and then with incredulous surprise, exclaimed, with a burst of delighted recognition, like a child finding a long-lost plaything, "My darling boy!" And going to Cashel with the grace of a swan, she clasped him in her arms. In acknowledgment of which he thrust his red, discomfited face over her shoulder, winked at Lydia with his tongue in his cheek, and said,

"This is what you may call the voice of nature, and no mistake."

"What a splendid creature you are!" said Mrs. Byron, holding him a little way from her, the better to admire him. "Do you know how handsome you are, you wretch?"

"How d'ye do, Miss Carew," said Cashel, breaking loose, and turning to Lydia. "Never mind her; it's only my mother. At least," he added, as if correcting himself, "she's my mamma."

"And where have you come from? Where have you been? Do you know that I have not seen you for seven years, you unnatural boy? Think of his being my son, Miss Carew. Give me another kiss, my own," she continued, grasping his arm affectionately. "What a muscular creature you are!"

"Kiss away as much as you like," said Cashel, struggling with the old school-boy sullenness as it returned oppressively upon him. "I suppose you're well. You look right enough."

"Yes," she said, mockingly, beginning to despise him for his inability to act up to her in this thrilling scene; "I *am* right enough. Your language is as refined as ever. And why do you get your hair cropped close like that? You must let it grow, and—"

"Now, look here," said Cashel, stopping her hand neatly as she raised it to rearrange his locks. "You just drop it, or I'll walk out at that door and you won't see me again for another seven years. You can either take me as you find me, or let me alone. Absalom and Dan Mendoza came to grief through wearing their hair long, and I am going to wear mine short."

Mrs. Byron became a shade colder. "Indeed!" she said. "Just the same still, Cashel?"

"Just the same, both one and other of us," he replied. "Before you spoke six words I felt as if we'd parted only yesterday."

"I am rather taken aback by the success of my experiment," interposed Lydia. "I invited you purposely to meet one another. The resemblance between you led me to suspect the truth, and my suspicion was confirmed by the account Mr. Byron gave me of his adventures."

Mrs. Byron's vanity was touched. "Is he like me?" she said, scanning his features. He, without heeding her, said to Lydia with undisguised mortification,

"And was *that* why you sent for me?"

"Are you disappointed?" said Lydia.

"He is not in the least glad to see me," said Mrs. Byron, plaintively. "He has no heart."

"Now she'll go on for the next hour," said Cashel, looking to Lydia, obviously because he found it much pleasanter than looking at his mother. "However, if you don't care, I don't. So, fire away, mamma."

"And you think we are really like one another?" said Mrs. Byron, not heeding him. "Yes; I think we are. There is a certain— Are you married, Cashel?" with sudden mistrust.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted Cashel. "No; but I hope to be, some day," he added, venturing to glance again at Lydia, who was, however, attentively observing Mrs. Byron.

"Well, tell me everything about yourself. What are you? Now, I do hope, Cashel, that you have not gone upon the stage."

"The stage!" said Cashel, contemptuously. "Do I look like it?"

"You certainly do not," said Mrs. Byron, whimsically—"although you have a certain odious professional air, too. What did you do when you ran away so scandalously from that stupid school in the north? How do you earn your living? Or *do* you earn it?"

"I suppose I do, unless I am fed by ravens, as Elijah was. What do you think I was best fitted for by my education and bringing up? Sweep a crossing, perhaps! When I ran away from Panley, I went to sea."

"A sailor, of all things! You don't look like one. And pray, what rank have you attained in your profession?"

"The front rank. The top of the tree," said Cashel, shortly.

"Mr. Byron is not at present following the profession of a sailor; nor has he done so for many years," said Lydia.

Cashel looked at her, half in appeal, half in remonstrance.

"Something very different, indeed," pursued Lydia, with quiet obstinacy. "And something very startling."

"*Can't* you shut up?" exclaimed Cashel. "I should have expected more sense from you. What's the use of setting her on to make a fuss and put me in a rage? I'll go away if you don't stop."

"What is the matter?" said Mrs. Byron. "Have you been doing anything disgraceful, Cashel?"

"There she goes. I told you so. I keep a gymnasium, that's all. There's nothing disgraceful in that, I hope."

"A gymnasium?" repeated Mrs. Byron, with imperious disgust. "What nonsense! You must give up everything of that kind, Cashel. It is very silly, and very low. You were too ridiculously proud, of course, to come to me for the means of keeping yourself in a proper position. I suppose I shall have to provide you with—"

"If I ever take a penny from you, may I—" Cashel caught Lydia's anxious look, and checked himself. He paused and got away a step, a cunning smile flickering on his lips. "No," he said; "it's just playing into your hands to lose temper with you. You think you know me, and you want to force the fighting. Well, we'll see. Make me angry now if you can."

"There is not the slightest reason for anger," said Mrs. Byron, angry herself. "Your temper seems to have become ungovernable—or, rather, to have remained so; for it was never remarkable for sweetness."

"No," retorted Cashel, jeering good-humoredly. "Not the slightest occasion to lose my temper! Not when I am told that I am silly and low! Why, I think you must fancy that you're talking to your little Cashel, that blessed child you were so fond of. But you're not. You're talking—now for a screech, Miss Carew!—to the champion of Australia, the United States, and England, holder of three silver belts and one gold one (which you can have to wear in 'King John' if you think it'll become you); professor of boxing to the nobility and gentry of St. James's, and common prize-fighter to the whole globe, without reference to weight or color, for not less than five hundred pounds a side. That's Cashel Byron."

Mrs. Byron recoiled, astounded. After a pause she said, "Oh, Cashel, how *could* you?" Then, approaching him again, "Do you mean to say that you go out and fight those great rough savages?"

"Yes, I do."

"And that you *beat* them?"

"Yes. Ask Miss Carew how Billy Paradise looked after standing before me for an hour."

"You wonderful boy! What an occupation! And you have done all this in your own name?"

"Of course I have. I am not ashamed of it. I often wondered whether you had seen my name in the papers."

"I never read the papers. But you must have heard of my return to England. Why did you not come to see me?"

"I wasn't quite certain that you would like it," said Cashel, uneasily, avoiding her eye. "Hullo!" he exclaimed, as he attempted to refresh himself by another look at Lydia, "she's given us the slip."

"She is quite right to leave us alone together under the circumstances. And now tell me why my precious boy should doubt that his own mother wished to see him."

"I don't know why he should," said Cashel, with melancholy submission to her affection. "But he did."

"How insensible you are! Did you not know that you were always my cherished darling—my only son?"

Cashel, who was now sitting beside her on an ottoman, groaned and moved restlessly, but said nothing.

"Are you glad to see me?"

"Yes," said Cashel, dismally, "I suppose I am. I— By Jingo," he cried, with sudden animation, "perhaps you can give me a lift here. I never thought of that. I say, mamma; I am in great trouble at present, and I think you can help me if you will."

Mrs. Byron looked at him satirically. But she said, soothingly, "Of course I will help you—as far as I am able—my precious one. All I possess is yours."

Cashel ground his feet on the floor impatiently, and then sprang up. After an interval, during which he seemed to be swallowing some indignant protest, he said,

"You may put your mind at rest, once and for all, on the subject of money. I don't want anything of that sort."

"I am glad you are so independent, Cashel."

"So am I."

"Do, pray, be more amiable."

"I am amiable enough," he cried, desperately, "only you won't listen."

"My treasure," said Mrs. Byron, remorsefully. "What is the matter?"

"Well," said Cashel, somewhat mollified, "it is this. I want to marry Miss Carew; that's all."

"*You* marry Miss Carew!" Mrs. Byron's tenderness had vanished, and her tone was shrewd and contemptuous. "Do you know, you silly boy, that—"

"I know all about it," said Cashel, determinedly—"what she is, and what I am, and the rest of it. And I want to marry her; and, what's more, I will marry her, if I have to break the neck of every swell in London first. So you can either help me or not, as you please; but if you won't, never call me your precious boy any more. Now!"

Mrs. Byron abdicated her dominion there and then forever. She sat with quite a mild expression for some time in silence. Then she said,

"After all, I do not see why you should not. It would be a very good match for you."

"Yes; but a deuced bad one for her."

"Really, I do not see that, Cashel. When your uncle dies, I suppose you will succeed to the Dorsetshire property."

"I the heir to a property! Are you in earnest?"

"Of course. Don't you know who your people are?"

"How could I? You never told me. Do you mean to say that I have an uncle?"

"Old Bingley Byron? Certainly."

"Well, I *am* blowed. But—but—I mean— Supposing he *is* my uncle, am I his lawful heir?"

"Yes. Walford Byron, the only other brother of your father, died years ago, while you were at Moncrief's; and he had no sons. Bingley is a bachelor."

"But," said Cashel, cautiously, "won't there be some bother about my—at least—"

"My dearest child, what are you thinking or talking about? Nothing can be clearer than your title."

"Well," said Cashel, blushing, "a lot of people used to make out that you weren't married at all."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Byron, indignantly. "Oh, they *dare* not say so! Impossible. Why did you not tell me at once?"

"I didn't think about it," said Cashel, hastily excusing himself. "I was too young to care. It doesn't matter now. My father is dead, isn't he?"

"He died when you were a baby. You have often made me angry with you, poor little innocent, by reminding me of him. Do not talk of him to me."

"Not if you don't wish. Just one thing, though, mamma. Was he a gentleman?"

"Of course. What a question!"

"Then I am as good as any of the swells that think themselves her equals? She has a cousin in the government office; a fellow who gives out that he is the home secretary, and most likely sits in a big chair in a hall and cheeks the public. Am I as good as he is?"

"You are perfectly well connected by your mother's side, Cashel. The Byrons are only commoners; but even they are one of the oldest county families in England."

Cashel began to show signs of excitement. "How much a year are they worth?" he demanded.

"I do not know how much they are worth now. Your father was always in difficulties, and so was his father. But Bingley is a miser. Five thousand a year, perhaps."

"That's an independence. That's enough. She said she couldn't expect a man to be so thunderingly rich as she is."

"Indeed? Then you have discussed the question with her?"

Cashel was about to speak, when a servant entered to say that Miss Carew was in the library, and begged that they would come to her as soon as they were quite disengaged. When the maid withdrew he said, eagerly,

"I wish you'd go home, mamma, and let me catch her in the library by herself. Tell me where you live, and I'll come in the evening and tell you all about it. That is, if you have no objection."

"What objection could I possibly have, dearest one? Are you sure that you are not spoiling your chance by too much haste? She has no occasion to hurry, Cashel, and she knows it."

"I am dead certain that now is my time or never. I always know by instinct when to go in and finish. Here's your mantle."

"In such a hurry to get rid of your poor old mother, Cashel?"

"Oh, bother! you're not old. You won't mind my wanting you to go for this once, will you?"

She smiled affectionately, put on her mantle, and turned her cheek towards him to be kissed. The unaccustomed gesture alarmed him; he retreated a step, and involuntary assumed an attitude of self-defence, as if the problem before him were a pugilistic one. Recovering himself immediately, he kissed her, and impatiently accompanied her to the house door, which he closed softly behind her, leaving her to walk in search of her carriage alone. Then he stole up-stairs to the library, where he found Lydia reading.

"She's gone," he said.

Lydia put down her book, looked up at him, saw what was coming, looked down again to hide a spasm of terror, and said, with a steady severity that cost her a great effort, "I hope you have not quarrelled."

"Lord bless you, no! We kissed one another like turtle-doves. At odd moments she wheedles me into feeling fond of her in spite of myself. She went away because I asked her to."

"And why do you ask my guests to go away?"

"Because I wanted to be alone with you. Don't look as if you didn't understand. She's told me a whole heap of things about myself that alter our affairs completely. My birth is all right; I'm heir to a county family that came over with the Conqueror, and I shall have a decent income. I can afford to give away weight to old Webber now."

"Well," said Lydia, sternly.

"Well," said Cashel, unabashed, "the only use of all that to me is that I may marry if I like. No more fighting or teaching now."

"And when you are married, will you be as tender to your wife as you are to your mother?"

Cashel's elation vanished. "I knew you'd think that," he said. "I am always the same with her; I can't help it. She makes me look like a fool, or like a brute. Have I ever been so with you?"

"Yes," said Lydia. "Except," she added, "that you have never shown absolute dislike to me."

"Ah! *Except!* That's a very big except. But I don't dislike her. Blood is thicker than water, and I have a softness for her; only I won't put up with her nonsense. But it's different with you. I don't know how to say it; I'm not good at sentiment—not that there's any sentiment about it. At least, I don't mean that; but— You're fond of me in a sort of way, ain't you?"

"Yes; I'm fond of you in a sort of way."

"Well, then," he said, uneasily, "won't you marry me? I'm not such a fool as you think; and you'll like me better after a while."

Lydia became very pale. "Have you considered," she said, "that henceforth you will be an idle man, and that I shall always be a busy woman, preoccupied with the work that may seem very dull to you?"

"I won't be idle. There's lots of things I can do besides boxing. We'll get on together, never fear. People that are fond of one another never have any difficulty; and people that hate each other never have any comfort. I'll be on the lookout to make you happy. You needn't fear my interrupting your Latin and Greek: I won't expect you to give up your whole life to me. Why should I? There's reason in everything. So long as you are mine, and nobody else's, I'll be content. And I'll be yours and nobody else's. What's the use of supposing half a dozen accidents that may never happen? Let's sign reasonable articles, and then take our chance. You have too much good-nature ever to be nasty."

"It would be a hard bargain," she said, doubtfully; "for you would have to give up your occupation; and I should give up nothing but my unfruitful liberty."

"I will swear never to fight again; and you needn't swear anything. If that is not an easy bargain, I don't know what is."

"Easy for me, yes. But for you?"

"Never mind me. You do whatever you like; and I'll do whatever you like. You have a conscience; so I know that whatever you like will be the best thing. I have the most science; but you have the most sense. Come!"

Lydia looked around, as if for a means of escape. Cashel waited anxiously. There was a long pause.

"It can't be," he said, pathetically, "that you are afraid of me because I was a prize-fighter."

"Afraid of you! No: I am afraid of myself; afraid of the future; afraid *for* you. But my mind is already made up on this subject. When I brought about this meeting between you and your mother I determined to marry you if you asked me again."

She stood up, quietly, and waited. The rough hardihood of the ring fell from him like a garment: he blushed deeply, and did not know what to do. Nor did she; but without willing it she came a step closer to him, and turned up her face towards his. He, nearly blind with confusion, put his arms about her and kissed her. Suddenly she broke loose from his arms, seized the lapels of his coat tightly in her hands, and leaned back until she nearly hung from him with all her weight.

"Cashel," she said, "we are the silliest lovers in the world, I believe—we know nothing about it. Are you really fond of me?"

She recovered herself immediately, and made no further demonstration of the kind. He remained shy, and was so evidently anxious to go, that she presently asked him to leave her for a while, though she was surprised to feel a faint pang of disappointment when he consented.

On leaving the house he hurried to the address which his mother had given him: a prodigious building in Westminster, divided into residential flats, to the seventh floor of which he ascended in a lift. As he stepped from it he saw Lucian Webber walking away from him along a corridor. Obeying a sudden impulse, he followed, and overtook him just as he was entering a room. Lucian, finding that some one was resisting his attempt to close the door, looked out, recognized Cashel, turned white, and hastily retreated into the apartment, where, getting behind a writing-table, he snatched a revolver from a drawer. Cashel recoiled, amazed and frightened, with his right arm up as if to ward off a blow.

"Hullo!" he cried. "Drop that d——d thing, will you? If you don't, I'll shout for help."

"If you approach me I will fire," said Lucian, excitedly. "I will teach you that your obsolete brutality is powerless against the weapons science has put into the hands of civilized men. Leave my apartments. I am not afraid of you; but I do not choose to be disturbed by your presence."

"Confound your cheek," said Cashel, indignantly; "is that the way you receive a man who comes to make a friendly call on you?"

"Friendly *now*, doubtless, when you see that I am well protected."

Cashel gave a long whistle. "Oh," he said, "you thought I came to pitch into you. Ha! ha! And you call that science—to draw a pistol on a man. But you daren't fire it, and well you know it. You'd better put it up, or you may let it off without intending to: I never feel comfortable when I see a fool meddling with firearms. I came to tell you that I'm going to be married to your cousin. Ain't you glad?"

Lucian's face changed. He believed; but he said, obstinately, "I don't credit that statement. It is a lie."

This outraged Cashel. "I tell you again," he said, in a menacing tone, "that your cousin is engaged to me. Now call me a liar, and hit me in the face, if you dare. Look here," he added, taking a leather case from his pocket, and extracting from it a bank note, "I'll give you that twenty-pound note if you will hit me one blow."

Lucian, sick with fury, and half paralyzed by a sensation which he would not acknowledge as fear, forced himself to come forward. Cashel thrust out his jaw invitingly, and said, with a sinister grin, "Put it in straight, governor. Twenty pounds, remember."

At that moment Lucian would have given all his political and social chances for the courage and skill of a prize-fighter. He could see only one way to escape the torment of Cashel's jeering and the self-reproach of a coward. He desperately clenched his fist and struck out. The blow wasted itself on space; and he stumbled forward against his adversary, who laughed uproariously, grasped his hand, clapped him on the back, and exclaimed, "Well done, my boy. I thought you were going to be mean; but you've been game, and you're welcome to the stakes. I'll tell Lydia that you have fought me for twenty pounds and won on your merits. Ain't you proud of yourself for having had a go at the champion?"

"Sir—" began Lucian. But nothing coherent followed.

"You just sit down for a quarter of an hour, and don't drink anything, and you'll be all right. When you recover you'll be glad you showed pluck. So, good-night, for the present—I know how you feel, and I'll be off. Be sure not to try to settle yourself with wine; it'll only make you worse. Ta-ta!"

As Cashel withdrew, Lucian collapsed into a chair, shaken by the revival of passions and jealousies which he had thought as completely outgrown as the schoolboy jackets in which he had formerly experienced them. He tried to think of some justification of his anger—some better reason for it than the vulgar taunt of a bully. He told himself presently that the idea of Lydia marrying such a man had maddened him to strike. As Cashel had predicted, he was beginning to plume himself on his pluck. This vein of reflection, warring with his inner knowledge that he had been driven by fear and hatred into a paroxysm of wrath against a man to whom he should have set an example of dignified self-control, produced an exhausting whirl in his thoughts, which were at once quickened and confused by the nervous shock of bodily violence, to which he was quite unused. Unable to sit still, he rose, put on his hat, went out, and drove to the house in Regent's Park.

Lydia was in her boudoir, occupied with a book, when he entered. He was not an acute observer; he could see no change in her. She was as calm as ever; her eyes were not even fully open, and the touch of her hand subdued him as it had always done. Though he had never entertained any hope of possessing her since the day when she had refused him in Bedford Square, a sense of intolerable loss came upon him as he saw her for the first time pledged to another—and such another!

"Lydia," he said, trying to speak vehemently, but failing to shake off the conventional address of which he had made a second nature, "I have heard something that has filled me with inexpressible dismay. Is it true?"

"The news has travelled fast," she said. "Yes; it is true." She spoke composedly, and so kindly that he choked in trying to reply.

"Then, Lydia, you are the chief actor in a greater tragedy than I have ever witnessed on the stage."

"It is strange, is it not?" she said, smiling at his effort to be impressive.

"Strange! It is calamitous. I trust I may be allowed to say so. And you sit there reading as calmly as though nothing had happened."

She handed him the book without a word.

"'Ivanhoe'!" he said. "A novel!"

"Yes. Do you remember once, before you knew me very well, telling me that Scott's novels were the only ones that you liked to see in the hands of ladies?"

"No doubt I did. But I cannot talk of literature just—"

"I am not leading you away from what you want to talk about. I was about to tell you that I came upon 'Ivanhoe' by chance half an hour ago, when I was searching—I confess it—for something very romantic to read. Ivanhoe was a prize-fighter—the first half of the book is a description of a prize-fight. I was wondering whether some romancer of the twenty-fourth century will hunt out the exploits of my husband, and present him to the world as a sort of English nineteenth-century Cyd, with all the glory of antiquity upon his deeds."

Lucian made a gesture of impatience. "I have never been able to understand," he said, "how it is that a woman of your ability can habitually dwell on perverse and absurd ideas. Oh, Lydia, is this to be the end of all your great gifts and attainments? Forgive me if I touch a painful chord; but this marriage seems to me so unnatural that I must speak out. Your father made you one of the richest and best-educated women in the world. Would he approve of what you are about to do?"

"It almost seems to me that he educated me expressly to some such end. Whom would you have me marry?"

"Doubtless few men are worthy of you, Lydia. But this man least of all. Could you not marry a gentleman? If he were even an artist, a poet, or a man of genius of any kind, I could bear to think of it; for indeed I am not influenced by class prejudice in the matter. But a—I will try to say nothing that you must not in justice admit to be too obvious to be ignored—a man of the lower orders, pursuing a calling which even the lower orders despise; illiterate, rough, awaiting at this moment a disgraceful sentence at the hands of the law! Is it possible that you have considered all these things?"

"Not very deeply; they are not of a kind to concern me much. I can console you as to one of them. I have always recognized him as a gentleman, in your sense of the word. He proves to be so—one of considerable position, in fact. As to his approaching trial, I have spoken with Lord Worthington about it, and also with the lawyers who have charge of the case; and they say positively that, owing to certain proofs not being in the hands of the police, a defence can be set up that will save him from imprisonment."

"There is no such defence possible," said Lucian, angrily.

"Perhaps not. As far as I understand it, it is rather an aggravation of the offence than an excuse for it. But if they imprison him it will make no difference. He can console himself by the certainty that I will marry him at once when he is released."

Lucian's face lengthened. He abandoned the argument, and said, blankly, "I cannot suppose that you would allow yourself to be deceived. If he is a gentleman of position, that of course alters the case completely."

"Very little indeed from my point of view. Hardly at all. And now, worldly cousin Lucian, I have satisfied you that I am not going to connect you by marriage with a butcher, bricklayer, or other member of the trades from which Cashel's profession, as you warned me, is usually recruited. Stop a moment. I am going to do justice to you. You want to say that my unworldly friend Lucian is far more deeply concerned at seeing the phœnix of modern culture throw herself away on a man unworthy of her."

"That *is* what I mean to say, except that you put it too modestly. It is a case of the phœnix, not only of modern culture, but of natural endowment and of every happy accident of the highest civilization, throwing herself away on a man specially incapacitated by his tastes and pursuits from comprehending her or entering the circle in which she moves."

"Listen to me patiently, Lucian, and I will try to explain the mystery to you, leaving the rest of the world to misunderstand me as it pleases. First, you will grant me that even a phœnix must marry some one in order that she may hand on her torch to her children. Her best course would be to marry another phœnix; but as she—poor girl!—cannot appreciate even her own phœnixity, much less that of another, she must perforce be content with a mere mortal. Who is the mortal to be? Not her cousin Lucian; for rising young politicians must have helpful wives, with feminine politics and powers of visiting and entertaining; a description inapplicable to the phœnix. Not, as you just now suggested, a man of letters.

The phœnix has had her share of playing helpmeet to a man of letters, and does not care to repeat that experience. She is sick to death of the morbid introspection and womanish self-consciousness of poets, novelists, and their like. As to artists, all the good ones are married; and ever since the rest have been able to read in hundreds of books that they are the most gifted and godlike of men, they are become almost as intolerable as their literary flatterers. No, Lucian, the phœnix has paid her debt to literature and art by the toil of her childhood. She will use and enjoy both of them in future as best she can; but she will never again drudge in their laboratories. You say that she might at least have married a gentleman. But the gentlemen she knows are either amateurs of the arts, having the egotism of professional artists without their ability, or they are men of pleasure, which means that they are dancers, tennis-players, butchers, and gamblers. I leave the nonentities out of the question. Now, in the eyes of a phœnix, a prize-fighter is a hero in comparison with a wretch who sets a leash of greyhounds upon a hare. Imagine, now, this poor phœnix meeting with a man who had never been guilty of self-analysis in his life—who complained when he was annoyed, and exulted when he was glad, like a child (and unlike a modern man)—who was honest and brave, strong and beautiful. You open your eyes, Lucian: you do not do justice to Cashel's good looks. He is twenty-five, and yet there is not a line in his face. It is neither thoughtful, nor poetic, nor wearied, nor doubting, nor old, nor self-conscious, as so many of his contemporaries' faces are —as mine perhaps is. The face of a pagan god, assured of eternal youth, and absolutely disqualified from comprehending 'Faust.' Do you understand a word of what I am saying, Lucian?"

"I must confess that I do not. Either you have lost your reason, or I have. I wish you had never tak~~in~~g to reading 'Faust.'"

"It is my fault. I began an explanation, and rambled off, womanlike, into praise of my lover. However, I will not attempt to complete my argument; for if you do not understand me from what I have already said, the further you follow the wider you will wander. The truth, in short, is this: I practically believe in the doctrine of heredity; and as my body is frail and my brain morbidly active, I think my impulse towards a man strong in body and untroubled in mind a trustworthy one. You can understand that; it is a plain proposition in eugenics. But if I tell you that I have chosen this common pugilist because, after seeing half the culture of Europe, I despaired of finding a better man, you will only tell me again that I have lost my reason."

"I know that you will do whatever you have made up your mind to do," said Lucian, desolately.

"And you will make the best of it, will you not?"

"The best or the worst of it does not rest with me. I can only accept it as inevitable."

"Not at all. You can make the worst of it by behaving distantly to Cashel; or the best of it by being friendly with him."

Lucian reddened and hesitated. She looked at him, mutely encouraging him to be generous.

"I had better tell you," he said. "I have seen him since—since—" Lydia nodded. "I mistook his object in coming into my room as he did, unannounced. In fact, he almost forced his way in. Some words arose between us. At last he taunted me beyond endurance, and offered me—characteristically—twenty pounds to strike him. And I am sorry to say that I did so."

"You did so! And what followed?"

"I should say rather that I meant to strike him; for he avoided me, or else I missed my aim. He only gave the money and went away, evidently with a high opinion of me. He left me with a very low one of myself."

"What! He did not retaliate!" exclaimed Lydia, recovering her color, which had fled. "And you *struck* him!" she added.

"He did not," replied Lucian, passing by the reproach. "Probably he despised me too much."

"That is not fair, Lucian. He behaved very well—for a prize-fighter! Surely you do not grudge him his superiority in the very art you condemn him for professing."

"I was wrong, Lydia; but I grudged him you. I know I have acted hastily; and I will apologize to him. I wish matters had fallen out otherwise."

"They could not have done so; and I believe you will yet acknowledge that they have arranged themselves very well. And now that the phœnix is disposed of, I want to read you a letter I have received from Alice Goff, which throws quite a new light on her character. I have not seen her since June, and she seems to have gained three years' mental growth in the interim. Listen to this, for example."

And so the conversation turned upon Alice.

When Lucian returned to his chambers, he wrote the following note, which he posted to Cashel Byron before going to bed:

"Dear Sir,—I beg to enclose you a bank-note which you left here this evening. I feel bound to express my regret for what passed on that occasion, and to assure you that it proceeded from a misapprehension of your purpose in calling on me. The nervous disorder into which the severe mental application and late hours of the past session have thrown me must be my excuse. I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you again soon, and offering you personally my congratulations on your approaching marriage.

"I am, dear sir, yours truly,

"Lucian Webber."

CHAPTER XV

In the following month Cashel Byron, William Paradise, and Robert Mellish appeared in the dock together, the first two for having been principals in a prize-fight, and Mellish for having acted as bottle-holder to Paradise. These offences were verbosely described in a long indictment which had originally included the fourth man who had been captured, but against whom the grand jury had refused to find a true bill. The prisoners pleaded not guilty.

The defence was that the fight, the occurrence of which was admitted, was not a prize-fight, but the outcome of an enmity which had subsisted between the two men since one of them, at a public exhibition at Islington, had attacked and bitten the other. In support of this, it was shown that Byron had occupied a house at Wiltstoken, and had lived there with Mellish, who had invited Paradise to spend a holiday with him in the country. This accounted for the presence of the three men at Wiltstoken on the day in question. Words had arisen between Byron and Paradise on the subject of the Islington affair; and they had at last agreed to settle the dispute in the old English fashion. They had adjourned to a field, and fought fairly and determinedly until interrupted by the police, who were misled by appearances into the belief that the affair was a prize-fight.

Prize-fighting was a brutal pastime, Cashel Byron's counsel said; but a fair, stand-up fight between two unarmed men, though doubtless technically a breach of the peace, had never been severely dealt with by a British jury or a British judge; and the case would be amply met by binding over the prisoners, who were now on the best of terms with one another, to keep the peace for a reasonable period. The sole evidence against this view of the case, he argued, was police evidence; and the police were naturally reluctant to admit that they had found a mare's nest. In proof that the fight had been premeditated, and was a prize-fight, they alleged that it had taken place within an enclosure formed with ropes and stakes. But where were those ropes and stakes? They were not forthcoming; and he (counsel) submitted that the reason was not, as had been suggested, because they had been spirited away, for that was plainly impossible; but because they had existed only in the excited imagination of the posse of constables who had arrested the prisoners.

Again, it had been urged that the prisoners were in fighting costume. But cross-examination had elicited that fighting costume meant practically no costume at all: the men had simply stripped in order that their movements might be unembarrassed. It had been proved that Paradise had been—well, in the traditional costume of Paradise (roars of laughter) until the police borrowed a blanket to put upon him.

That the constables had been guilty of gross exaggeration was shown by their evidence as to the desperate injuries the combatants had inflicted upon one another. Of Paradise in particular it had been alleged that his features were obliterated. The jury had before them in the dock the man whose features had been obliterated only a few weeks previously. If that were true, where had the prisoner obtained the unblemished lineaments which he was now, full of health and good-humor, presenting to them? (Renewed laughter. Paradise grinning in confusion.) It was said that these terrible injuries, the traces of which had disappeared so miraculously, were inflicted by the prisoner Byron, a young gentleman tenderly nurtured, and visibly inferior in strength and hardihood to his herculean opponent. Doubtless Byron had been emboldened by his skill in mimic combat to try conclusions, under the very different conditions of real fighting, with a man whose massive shoulders and determined cast of features ought to have convinced him that such an enterprise was nothing short of desperate. Fortunately the police had interfered before he had suffered severely for his rashness. Yet it had been alleged that he had actually worsted Paradise in the encounter—obliterated his features. That was a fair sample of the police evidence, which was throughout consistently incredible and at variance with the dictates of common-sense.

Attention was then drawn to the honorable manner in which Byron had come forward and given himself up to the police the moment he became aware that they were in search of him. Paradise would, beyond a doubt, have adopted the same course had he not been arrested at once, and that, too, without the least effort at resistance on his part. That was hardly the line of conduct that would have suggested itself to two lawless prize-fighters.

An attempt had been made to prejudice the prisoner Byron by the statement that he was a notorious professional bruiser. But no proof of that was forthcoming; and if the fact were really notorious there could be no difficulty in proving it. Such notoriety as Mr. Byron enjoyed was due, as appeared from the evidence of Lord Worthington and others, to his approaching marriage to a lady of distinction. Was it credible that a highly connected gentleman in this enviable position would engage in a prize-fight, risking disgrace and personal disfigurement, for a sum of money that could be no object to him, or for a glory that would appear to all his friends as little better than infamy?

The whole of the evidence as to the character of the prisoners went to show that they were men of unimpeachable integrity and respectability. An impression unfavorable to Paradise might have been created by the fact that he was a professional pugilist and a man of hasty temper; but it had also transpired that he had on several occasions rendered assistance to the police, thereby employing his skill and strength in the interests of law and order. As to his temper, it accounted for the quarrel which the police—knowing his profession—had mistaken for a prize-fight.

Mellish was a trainer of athletes, and hence the witnesses to his character were chiefly persons connected with sport; but they were not the less worthy of credence on that account.

In fine, the charge would have been hard to believe even if supported by the strongest evidence. But when there was no evidence—when the police had failed to produce any of the accessories of a prize-fight—when there were no ropes nor posts—no written articles—no stakes nor stakeholders—no seconds except the unfortunate man Mellish, whose mouth was closed by a law which, in defiance of the obvious interests of justice, forbade a prisoner to speak and clear himself—nothing, in fact, but the fancies of constables who had, under cross-examination, not only contradicted one another, but shown the most complete ignorance (a highly creditable ignorance) of the nature and conditions of a prize-fight; then counsel would venture to say confidently that the theory of the prosecution, ingenious as it was, and ably as it had been put forward, was absolutely and utterly untenable.

This, and much more argument of equal value, was delivered with relish by a comparatively young barrister, whose spirits rose as he felt the truth change and fade while he rearranged its attendant circumstances. Cashel listened for some time anxiously. He flushed and looked moody when his marriage was alluded to; but when the whole defence was unrolled, he was awestruck, and stared at his advocate as if he half feared that the earth would gape and swallow such a reckless perverter of patent facts. Even the judge smiled once or twice; and when he did so the jurymen grinned, but recovered their solemnity suddenly when the bench recollected itself and became grave again. Every one in court knew that the police were right—that there had been a prize-fight—that the betting on it had been recorded in all the sporting papers for weeks beforehand—that Cashel was the most terrible fighting man of the day, and that Paradise had not dared to propose a renewal of the interrupted contest. And they listened with admiration and delight while the advocate proved that these things were incredible and nonsensical.

It remained for the judge to sweep away the defence, or to favor the prisoners by countenancing it. Fortunately for them, he was an old man; and could recall, not without regret, a time when the memory of Cribb and Molyneux was yet green. He began his summing-up by telling the jury that the police had failed to prove that the fight was a prize-fight. After that, the public, by indulging in roars of laughter whenever they could find a pretext for doing so without being turned out of court, showed that they had ceased to regard the trial seriously.

Finally the jury acquitted Mellish, and found Cashel and Paradise guilty of a common assault. They were sentenced to two days' imprisonment, and bound over to keep the peace for twelve months in sureties of one hundred and fifty pounds each. The sureties were forthcoming; and as the imprisonment was supposed to date from the beginning of the sessions, the prisoners were at once released.

CHAPTER XVI

Miss Carew, averse to the anomalous relations of courtship, made as little delay as possible in getting married. Cashel's luck was not changed by the event. Bingley Byron died three weeks after the ceremony (which was civic and private); and Cashel had to claim possession of the property in Dorsetshire, in spite of his expressed wish that the lawyers would take themselves and the property to the devil, and allow him to enjoy his honeymoon in peace. The transfer was not, however, accomplished at once. Owing to his mother's capricious reluctance to give the necessary information without reserve, and to the law's delay, his first child was born some time before his succession was fully established and the doors of his ancestral hall opened to him. The conclusion of the business was a great relief to his attorneys, who had been unable to shake his conviction that the case was clear enough, but that the referee had been squared. By this he meant that the Lord Chancellor had been bribed to keep him out of his property.

His marriage proved an unusually happy one. To make up for the loss of his occupation, he farmed, and lost six thousand pounds by it; tried gardening with better success; began to meddle in commercial enterprises, and became director of several trading companies in the city; and was eventually invited to represent a Dorsetshire constituency in Parliament in the Radical interest. He was returned by a large majority; and, having a loud voice and an easy manner, he soon acquired some reputation both in and out of the House of Commons by the popularity of his own views, and the extent of his wife's information, which he retailed at second hand. He made his maiden speech in the House unabashed the first night he sat there. Indeed, he was afraid of nothing except burglars, big dogs, doctors, dentists, and street-crossings. Whenever any accident occurred through any of these he preserved the newspaper in which it was reported, read it to Lydia very seriously, and repeated his favorite assertion that the only place in which a man was safe was the ring. As he objected to most field sports on the ground of inhumanity, she, fearing that he would suffer in health and appearance from want of systematic exercise, suggested that he should resume the practice of boxing with gloves. But he was lazy in this matter, and had a prejudice that boxing did not become a married man. His career as a pugilist was closed by his marriage.

His admiration for his wife survived the ardor of his first love for her, and she employed all her forethought not to disappoint his reliance on her judgment. She led a busy life, and wrote some learned monographs, as well as a work in which she denounced education as practised in the universities and public schools. Her children inherited her acuteness and refinement with their father's robustness and aversion to study. They were precocious and impudent, had no respect for Cashel, and showed any they had for their mother principally by running to her when they were in difficulties. She never punished nor scolded them; but she contrived to make their misdeeds recoil naturally upon them so inevitably that they soon acquired a lively moral sense which restrained them much more effectually than the usual methods of securing order in the nursery. Cashel treated them kindly for the purpose of conciliating them; and when Lydia spoke of them to him in private, he seldom said more than that the imps were too sharp for him, or that he was blest if he didn't believe that they were born older than their father. Lydia often thought so too; but the care of this troublesome family had one advantage for her. It left her little time to think about herself, or about the fact that when the illusion of her love passed away Cashel fell in her estimation. But the children were a success; and she soon came to regard him as one of them. When she had leisure to consider the matter at all, which seldom occurred, it seemed to her that, on the whole, she had chosen wisely.

Alice Goff, when she heard of Lydia's projected marriage, saw that she must return to Wiltstoken, and forget her brief social splendor as soon as possible. She therefore thanked Miss Carew for her bounty, and begged to relinquish her post of companion. Lydia assented, but managed to delay this sacrifice to a sense of duty and necessity until a day early in winter, when Lucian gave way to a hankering after domestic joys that possessed him, and allowed his cousin to persuade him to offer his hand to Alice. She indignantly refused—not that she had any reason to complain of him, but because the prospect of returning to Wiltstoken made her feel ill used, and she could not help revenging her soreness upon the first person whom she could find a pretext for attacking. He, lukewarm before, now became eager, and she was induced to relent without much difficulty. Lucian was supposed to have made a brilliant match; and, as it proved, he made a fortunate one. She kept his house, entertained his guests, and took charge of his social connections so ably that in course of time her invitations came to be coveted by people who were desirous of moving in good society. She was even better looking as a matron than she had been as a girl; and her authority in matters of etiquette inspired nervous novices with all the terrors she had herself felt when she first visited Wiltstoken Castle. She invited her brother-in-law and his wife to dinner twice a year—at midsummer and Easter; but she never admitted that either Wallace Parker or Cashel Byron were gentlemen, although she invited the latter freely, notwithstanding the frankness with which he spoke to strangers after dinner of his former exploits, without deference to their professions or prejudices. Her respect for Lydia remained so great that she never complained to her of Cashel save on one occasion, when he had shown a bishop, whose house had been recently broken into and robbed, how to break a burglar's back in the act of grappling with him.

The Skenes returned to Australia and went their way there, as Mrs. Byron did in England, in the paths they had pursued for years before. Cashel spoke always of Mrs. Skene as "mother," and of Mrs. Byron as "mamma."

William Paradise, though admired by the fair sex for his strength, courage, and fame, was not, like Cashel and Skene, wise or fortunate enough to get a good wife. He drank so exceedingly that he had but few sober intervals after his escape from the law. He claimed the title of champion of England on Cashel's retirement from the ring, and challenged the world. The world responded in the persons of sundry young laboring men with a thirst for glory and a taste for fighting. Paradise fought and prevailed twice. Then he drank while in training, and was beaten. But by this time the ring had again fallen into the disrepute from which Cashel's unusual combination of pugilistic genius with honesty had temporarily raised it; and the law, again seizing Paradise as he was borne vanquished from the field, atoned for its former leniency by incarcerating him for six months. The abstinence thus enforced restored him to health and vigor; and he achieved another victory before he succeeded in drinking himself into his former state. This was his last triumph. With his natural ruffianism complicated by drunkenness, he went rapidly down the hill into the valley of humiliation. After becoming noted for his readiness to sell the victories he could no longer win, he only appeared in the ring to test the capabilities of untried youths, who beat him to their hearts' content. He became a potman, and was immediately discharged as an inebriate. He had sunk into beggary when, hearing in his misery that his former antagonist was contesting a parliamentary election, he applied to him for alms. Cashel at the time was in Dorsetshire; but Lydia relieved the destitute wretch, whose condition was now far worse than it had been at their last meeting. At his next application, which followed soon, he was confronted by Cashel, who bullied him fiercely, threatened to break every bone in his skin if he ever again dared to present himself before Lydia, flung him five shillings, and bade him be gone. For Cashel retained for Paradise that contemptuous and ruthless hatred in which a duly qualified professor holds a quack. Paradise bought a few pence-worth of food, which he could hardly eat, and spent the rest in brandy, which he drank as fast as his stomach would endure it. Shortly afterwards a few sporting papers reported his death, which they attributed to "consumption, brought on by the terrible injuries sustained by him in his celebrated fight with Cashel Byron."

R.H. 3.7.35

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Shaw, George Bernard
Cashel Byron's profession

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